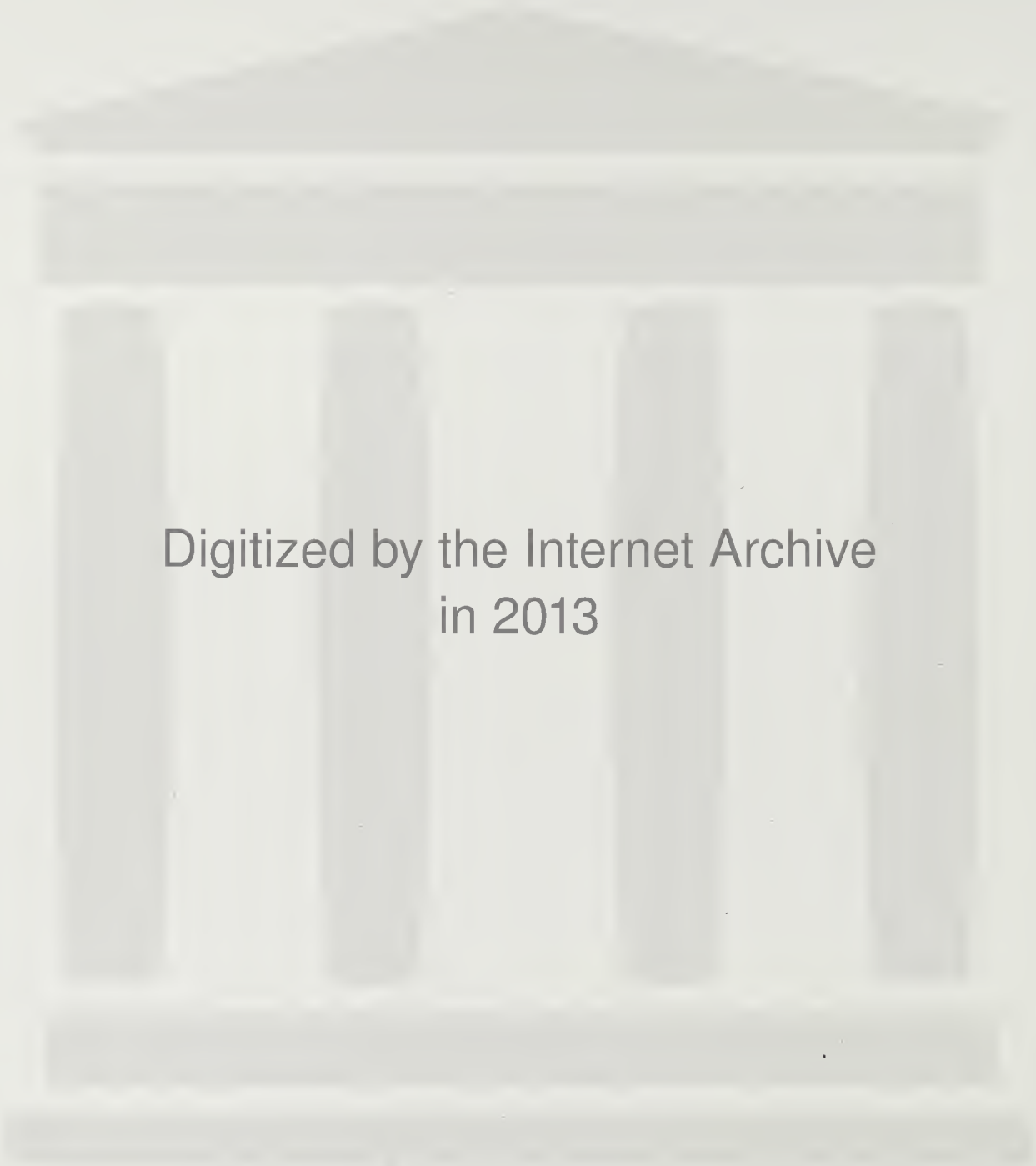
THE UNIVERSAL LESSON BOOK

101-PLUS POWERFUL SPIRITUAL READINGS FOR UNDERSTANDING, SUCCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

COMPILED BY DELBERT & SUSAN BAKER


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2013

http://archive.org/details/universallessonb2006bake

THE UNIVERSAL LESSON BOOK

101-PLUS POWERFUL SPIRITUAL READINGS FOR UNDERSTANDING, SUCCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

COMPILED BY DELBERT & SUSAN BAKER

THE UNIVERSAL LESSON BOOK

101-PLUS POWERFUL SPIRITUAL READINGS FOR UNDERSTANDING, SUCCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

Produced 2006, Oakwood College, Huntsville, Alabama

This collection of readings, stories, and study aids was compiled
and arranged by Delbert W. Baker, Ph.D., President of Oakwood College;
Susan M. Baker, DPTSc, Physical Therapist and Educator

Texts are quoted from The Message (The Msg), the Clear Word (CW), God's Word (GW), the New International Version (NIV), the King James Version (KJV), the New King James Version (NKJV), and the La Biblia De Las Americas (LBA) Bible Reading Selection Style Note: Throughout this QuoteBook, individual Bible reading selections are referred to by book and chapter only, not specific verses. This reference style is used even when only a portion of verses were selected from a given Bible chapter. For contextual flow and enlightenment the reader is encouraged to go to a Bible version or paraphrase of choice and read the respective chapters in context.

Typeface: ITC Giovanni
Cover design, book design, and layout: Howard Bullard
Project coordinator:
Jeannie Watkins
Proofreaders: Shirley Bailey, Kaven Ible; Shirley Iheanacho
Student Assistants: Candace Farrell; Kathryn McNorton; Fredrick Russell
This Quotebook, *The Universal Lesson Book*, is the eighth in the 101 Oakwood College Graduate QuoteBook Series prepared annually for Oakwood College graduates.
Quotebook titles include: *Powerful Traits for Christian Leaders* (2005); *Healthy Habits* (2004); *The Help-Yourself ListBook (2003); The Coping Workbook* (2002); *The Success Workbook* (2001); *The Satisfaction of Service* (2000); *Thoughts for the Journey* (1999)

Each of the QuoteBooks can be found at the Oakwood College website: www.oakwood.edu/goldmine/quotebook.

This Quotebook was underwritten by
Adventist Risk Management of Silver Spring, Maryland, Director; Robert Sweezy

DEDICATION

to the thousands of
Oakwood Men and Oakwood Women
who are deeply and passionately committed
to the integration of faith into their professions.

•

Commendations to the students in the following
Oakwood College departments:

Biological Sciences
Business and Information Systems
Chemistry and Allied Health
Communication
Education
English and Foreign Languages
Family and Consumer Sciences
Health and Physical Education
History
Adult and Continuing Education Program (LEAP)
Mathematics and Computer Science
Music
Nursing
Psychology
Religion and Theology
Social Work

LETTER TO GRADUATES

Dear Graduate and Reader,

The principles contained in this QuoteBook are priceless! Why? Because this little volume is filled with the Word of God from start to finish. It is packed with wisdom, counsel, warnings, insight and understanding on how to live a life of service. If used, it will be an invaluable guide for life-long learning and growth.

We have searched from Genesis to Revelation and compiled golden Bible chapters for your ready reference, reading and renewal. Deciding which Bible chapters to use was difficult. However, we prayed, analyzed and then created this unique list. Admittedly, we didn't quite make our goal of selecting only 101 chapters–when all was said and done, we selected 125 and an appendix full of valuable aids.

The readings come from the best and translations and paraphrases available. Each chapter was culled for its essence and labeled with a word and phrase that highlights a relevant principle for you–the 21st Century reader. Each section appropriately ends with an interactive question for your response and resolve.

Further, we have complimented each spiritual reading with an illustration from Gustave Dore, the 19th Century artist. Dore's art is graphic, vivid and relevant in that it provides an intuitive window on the biblical passages.

Read, enjoy, be wise, serve others, love Jesus. Joy, peace and success to you.

With love and best wishes,

President and Mrs. Delbert Baker

CONTENTS

1. Acceptance..... *John 4*..... 2
2. Accountability..... *Matthew 25*..... 6
3. Agreement with God..... *Hebrews 8*..... 10
4. Ambition..... *1 Kings 3*..... 14
5. Anatomy of an Affair ..... *2 Samuel 11*..... 18
6. Apprehension..... *Jonah 2*..... 22
7. Attitude ..... *Isaiah 12*..... 26
8. Backsliding..... *Hosea 14*..... 28
9. Bible Study..... *2 Timothy 4*..... 32
10. Calamity..... *Genesis 7*..... 36
11. Character..... *Matthew 5*..... 40
12. Choices..... *Proverbs 7*..... 44
13. Christ-Centered.....*Hebrews 1*..... 48
14. Coming Change.....*1 Corinthians 15*..... 52
15. Commandments.....*Exodus 20*..... 56
16. Communication..... *Amos 3*..... 60
17. Communicational Wisdom.. *James 3*..... 64
18. Complaining.....*Hababkuk 1*..... 68
19. Confidence.....*Joshua1*..... 72
20. Conflict.....*Jeremiah 1*..... 76
21. Conversion.....*John 3*..... 80
22. Counsel..... *Proverbs 1*..... 84
23. Creation..... *Genesis 1-2*..... 88

24. Critical Thinking..... *1 John 4*..... 92
25. Cross and Service..... *Mark 15*..... 96
26. Decision Making..... *Ruth 1*..... 100
27. Defense..... *Zechariah 3*..... 104
28. Deliverance..... *Acts 12*..... 108
29. Dependable God..... *John 10*..... 112
30. Destiny..... *Esther 4*..... 116
31. Development..... *2 Peter 1*..... 120
32. Dietary Principles..... *Leviticus 11*..... 124
33. Discipline..... *Hebrews 12*..... 128
34. Dissidents..... *Jude 1*..... 132
35. Divinity..... *John 1*..... 136
36. Empathy..... *2 Corinthians 1*..... 140
37. Emptiness..... *Ecclesiastes 2*..... 144
38. Evil Antagonism..... *Genesis 3*..... 148
39. Example..... *1 Timothy 4*..... 152
40. Expectations..... *Micah 6*..... 156
41. Faith Is the Key..... *Hebrews 11*..... 160
42. Farewell..... *Acts 1*..... 164
43. Finance..... *1 Timothy 6*..... 168
44. Fortitude..... *Daniel 1*..... 172
45. Friendship..... *1 Samuel 20*..... 176
46. Gender Boldness..... *Judges 4*..... 180
47. Geriatric..... *Ecclesiastes 12*..... 184
48. Gifts..... *1 Corinthians 12*..... 188
49. Goodness..... *Galatians 6*..... 192

50. Gospel Presentation..... *1 John 5*..... 196
51. Government..... *1 Peter 2*..... 200
52. Guidance..... *Psalm 23*..... 204
53. Harmony..... *Romans 14*..... 206
54. Health..... *3 John 1*..... 210
55. Hear, Believe, Obey..... *Titus 2*..... 214
56. Heaven..... *Revelation 21*..... 218
57. Heavenly Inhabitants..... *Matthew 17*..... 222
58. Holy Spirit..... *John 14*..... 226
59. Humility..... *John 13*..... 230
60. Influence..... *Numbers 13-14*..... 234
61. Insecurity..... *Judges 7*..... 238
62. Intercession..... *Philemon 1*..... 242
63. Invitation..... *Isaiah 55*..... 246
64. Joyful Love..... *2 John 1*..... 250
65. Judgments..... *Zephaniah 1*..... 254
66. Justice System..... *Numbers 35*..... 258
67. Last Day Delusions..... *2 Thessalonians 2*..... 262
68. Last Day Events..... *Joel 2*..... 266
69. Last Words..... *2 Samuel 23*..... 270
70. Lawsuits..... *1 Corinthians 6*..... 274
71. Liberation..... *Leviticus 25*..... 278
72. Life Balance..... *Hebrews 4*..... 282
73. Life Calling..... *Isaiah 6*..... 286
74. Life's Frailty..... *Psalm 39*..... 290
75. Love..... *1 Corinthians 13*..... 294

76. Love of God..... *Romans 8*..... 298
77. Love's Redemption..... *Hosea 3*..... 302
78. Marriage..... *Proverbs 31*..... 306
79. Message for Today..... *Revelation 14*..... 310
80. Messianic Prophecies..... *Isaiah 53*..... 314
81. Missions..... *Psalm 72*..... 318
82. Nourishment..... *John 15*..... 322
83. Outcomes..... *1 Chronicles 10-11*..... 326
84. Outreach Strategies..... *Luke 10*..... 330
85. Overcoming..... *Revelation 7*..... 334
86. Payback..... *Obadiah 1*..... 338
87. Perseverance..... *Nehemiah 4*..... 342
88. Piety..... *Daniel 6*..... 346
89. Praise..... *Revelation 19*..... 350
90. Praise Rationale..... *Psalm 130*..... 354
91. Prayer, Part 1..... *Luke 11*..... 356
92. Prayer, Part 2..... *Luke 18*..... 360
93. Probation Closed..... *Nahum 1*..... 364
94. Providence–The Creation..... *Ezekiel 1*..... 368
95. Reciprocity..... *2 Chronicles 7*..... 372
96. Relationships..... *Romans 12*..... 376
97. Repentance..... *Psalm 51*..... 380
98. Responsible Witnessing..... *Ezekiel 33*..... 384
99. Restoration..... *Micah 7*..... 388
100. Resurrection..... *1 Thessalonians 4*..... 392
101. Righteousness..... *Psalm 1*..... 396

24 ADDITIONAL GOLDEN CHAPTERS 399
102. Romance ..... *Song of Solomon 4* 400
103. Sacrifice ..... *Haggai 1* 404
104. Sanctification ..... *Colossians 2* 408
105. Servanthood ..... *Philippians 2* 412
106. Service ..... *2 Kings 2* 416
107. Sin and Evil ..... *James 1* 420
108. Sin's Insistence ..... *Romans 7-8* 424
109. Spiritual Warfare ..... *Ephesians 6* 428
110. Stewardship ..... *Malachi 3* 432
111. Stories and Parables ..... *Matthew 13* 436
112. Strategy ..... *Ezra 8* 440
113. Suffering ..... *Job 1* 444
114. Sustenance ..... *John 6* 448
115. Synergy ..... *Ephesians 4* 452
116. Teaching ..... *1 Corinthians 2* 456
117. Tears ..... *Lamentations 3* 460
118. Time ..... *Ecclesiastes 3* 464
119. True Confession ..... *Psalm 32* 468
120. True Fasting ..... *Isaiah 58* 472
121. Understanding Wisdom ..... *Proverbs 3* 476
122. Unity ..... *John 17* 480
123. Universal Equity ..... *Psalm 73* 484
124. Will of God ..... *1 Samuel 3* 488
125. Word of God ..... *Deuteronomy 6* 492

APPENDIX.....497
What the Bible Will Do For You..... 498
ABCs of Bible Reading (Psalm 119)..... 501
Nine Characteristics of a Highly Effective Devotional Life..... 518
Seven Secrets on How to Dig Deeper in God's Word..... 524
Seven Steps for Memorizing Scriptures..... 525
Fifteen Reasons to Read the Psalms..... 527
Bible Facts and Stats..... 528
Online Bible Study Resources..... 531
52-Week Bible Reading Plan..... 532

INDEX..... 535

Bible Books—Sequential Order..... 536

Bible Books—Alphabetical Order..... 538

INTRODUCTION

WHAT BIBLE STUDY WILL DO FOR YOU

by Ellen White

For the mind and the soul, as well as for the body, it is God's law that strength is acquired by effort. It is exercise that develops. In harmony with this law, God has provided in His word the means for mental and spiritual development.

The Bible contains all the principles that men need to understand in order to be fitted either for this life or for the life to come. And these principles may be understood by all. No one with a spirit to appreciate its teaching can read a single passage from the Bible without gaining from it some helpful thought.

The most valuable teaching of the Bible is not to be gained by occasional or disconnected study. Its great system of truth is not so presented as to be discerned by the hasty or careless reader. Many of its treasures lie far beneath the surface, and can be obtained only by diligent research and continuous effort.

Every principle in the word of God has its place, every fact its bearing. And the complete structure, in design and execution, bears testimony to its Author. Such a structure no mind but that of the Infinite could conceive or fashion.

In searching out the various parts and studying their relationship, the highest faculties of the human mind are called into intense activity. No one can engage in such study without developing mental power.

Bible study consists also in the effort required to grasp the themes presented. The mind occupied with commonplace matters only, becomes dwarfed and enfeebled. If never tasked to comprehend grand and far-reaching truths, it after a time loses the power of growth. As a safeguard against this degeneracy, and a stimulus to development, nothing else can equal the study of God's word.

As a means of intellectual training, the Bible is more effective than any other book, or all other books combined. The greatness of its themes, the dignified simplicity of its utterances, the beauty of its imagery, quicken and uplift the thoughts as nothing else can. No other study can impart such mental power as does the effort to grasp the stupendous truths of revelation. The mind thus brought in contact with the thoughts of the Infinite cannot but expand and strengthen.

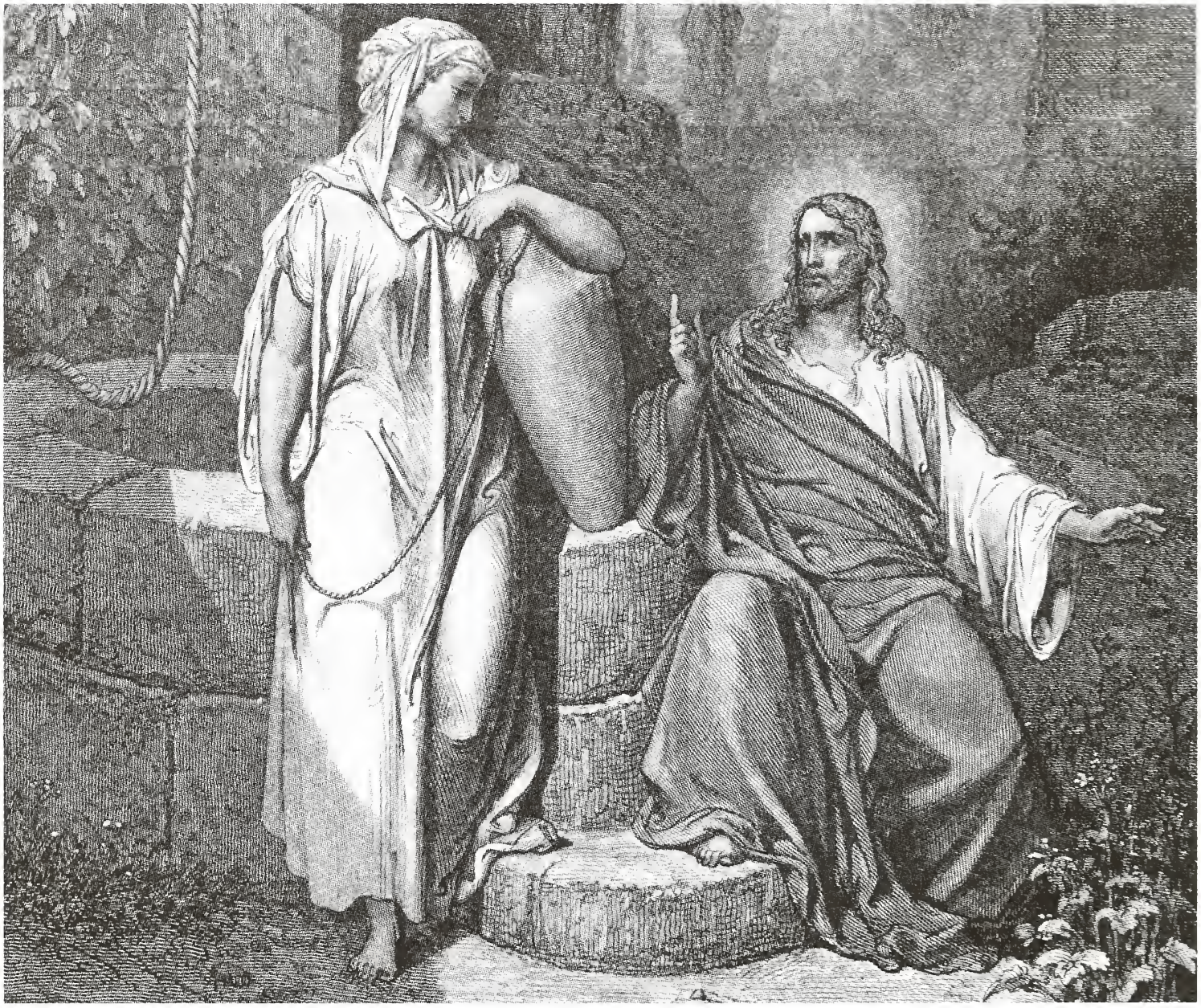
The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature and re-creates the soul in the image of God.

The mind, the soul, is built up by that upon which it feeds; and it rests with us to determine upon what it shall be fed. It is within the power of everyone to choose the topics that shall occupy the thoughts and shape the character. He who through the word of God has lived in fellowship with heaven, will find himself at home in heaven's companionship.

Taken from *Education*, by Ellen G. White, pages 123-127.

THE UNIVERSAL LESSON BOOK

101-PLUS POWERFUL SPIRITUAL READINGS FOR UNDERSTANDING, SUCCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT



Jesus Can Supply All Our Needs: *Jesus answered. "If you knew the generosity of God and who I am, you would be asking me for a drink, and I would give you fresh, living water." John 4:10*

ACCEPTANCE

Have Jesus, Have All You Need

John 4 (The Msg)

Jesus and the Woman at the Well

He came into Sychar, a Samaritan village that bordered the field Jacob had given his son Joseph. Jacob's well was still there. Jesus, worn out by the trip, sat down at the well. It was noon. A woman, a Samaritan, came to draw water. Jesus said, "Would you give me a drink of water?" (His disciples had gone to the village to buy food for lunch.)

The Samaritan woman, taken aback, asked, "How come you, a Jew, are asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (Jews in those days wouldn't be caught dead talking to Samaritans.)

Jesus answered, "If you knew the generosity of God and who I am, you would be asking me for a drink, and I would give you fresh, living water."

The woman said, "Sir, you don't even have a bucket to draw with, and this well is deep. So how are you going to get this 'living water'? Are you a better man than our ancestor Jacob, who dug this well and

drank from it, he and his sons and livestock, and passed it down to us?"

Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again and again. Anyone who drinks the water I give will never thirst—not ever. The water I give will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life."

The woman said, "Sir, give me this water so I won't ever get thirsty, won't ever have to come back to this well again!"

He said, "Go call your husband and then come back." "I have no husband," she said.

"That's nicely put: 'I have no husband.' You've had five husbands, and the man you're living with now isn't even your husband. You spoke the truth there, sure enough."

"Oh, so you're a prophet! Well, tell me this: Our ancestors worshiped God at this mountain, but you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place for worship, right?"

"Believe me, woman, the time is coming when you Samaritans will worship the Father neither here at this mountain nor there in Jerusalem. You worship guessing in the dark; we Jews worship in the clear light of day. God's way of salvation is made available through the Jews. But the time is coming—it has, in fact, come—when what you're called will not matter and where you go to worship will not matter.

"It's who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That's the kind

of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before him in their worship. God is sheer being itself—Spirit. Those who worship him must do it out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration."

The woman said, "I don't know about that. I do know that the Messiah is coming. When he arrives, we'll get the whole story."

"I am he," said Jesus. "You don't have to wait any longer or look any further."

Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked. They couldn't believe he was talking with that kind of a woman. No one said what they were all thinking, but their faces showed it.

The woman took the hint and left. In her confusion she left her water pot. Back in the village she told the people, "Come see a man who knew all about the things I did, who knows me inside and out. Do you think this could be the Messiah?" And they went out to see for themselves.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

You Can Be Ready for the Coming Judgment: *"The wise [bridesmaids] answered, 'We would love to help you, but if we share our extra oil with you, there won't be enough to last, and soon we'll all be in the dark. You need to hurry back and buy some extra oil for yourselves.'" Matthew 25:9*

ACCOUNTABILITY

Judgment is Coming

Matthew 25 (CW)

A Parable on the Final Judgment

During the time of the end the condition of my people will be similar to the ten bridesmaids who took their wedding lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of the bridesmaids were wise and made extra preparation, and five of them were foolish and did not. The foolish took only their wedding lamps with them with no extra oil, but the wise took some extra oil along.

The bridegroom was delayed, and while they waited for him to come, they all became drowsy; the foolish fell asleep, and even the wise began dozing off. Then at midnight, the shout rang out, 'The bridegroom's coming! Let's go out to meet him!'

All the bridesmaids jumped up with their lamps. But they saw to their dismay that their lamps had begun to burn low. Then the foolish bridesmaids turned to the wise bridesmaids and said, `Please share your extra oil with us! Our lamps are going out and the bridegroom is still not in sight!' The wise answered, 'We would love to help you, but

if we share our extra oil with you, there won't be enough to last, and soon we'll all be in the dark. You need to hurry back and buy some extra oil for yourselves.'

While the foolish bridesmaids were gone to buy more oil, the bridegroom came. The wise bridesmaids greeted him and, together with the bride, went in to the bridegroom's house, and the door was shut.

Soon the foolish bridesmaids returned, knocked on the door and called out, `Lord, please open up and let us in!' But the bridegroom said, `You're too late, and you're not our real friends or you would have been prepared and been on time. Besides, the door is already locked and won't be opened again.'

So the thing to do during the time of the end is to stay alert and make extra preparation in case of delay, because no one knows the day or the hour when the Son of God will come back.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

The Bible is a window in this prison-world, through which we may look into eternity

Timothy Dwight

Past to Present, Christ Has Provided a Way of Access: *"By coming up with a new plan, a new covenant between God and his people, God put the old plan on the shelf. And there it stays, gathering dust...."* Hebrews 8:13

AGREEMENT WITH GOD

Be Sure You Are Right with God

Hebrews 8 (The Msg)

The Covenants

In essence, we have just such a high priest: authoritative right alongside God, conducting worship in the one true sanctuary built by God. The assigned task of a high priest is to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and it's no different with the priesthood of Jesus. If he were limited to earth, he wouldn't even be a priest. We wouldn't need him since there are plenty of priests who offer the gifts designated in the law. These priests provide only a hint of what goes on in the true sanctuary of heaven, which Moses caught a glimpse of as he was about to set up the tent-shrine. It was then that God said, "Be careful to do it exactly as you saw it on the Mountain."

But Jesus' priestly work far surpasses what these other priests do, since he's working from a far better plan. If the first plan—the old covenant—had worked out, a second wouldn't have been needed. But we know the first was found wanting, because God said, Heads up! The

days are coming when I'll set up a new plan for dealing with Israel and Judah.

I'll throw out the old plan I set up with their ancestors when I led them by the hand out of Egypt. They didn't keep their part of the bargain, so I looked away and let it go. This new plan I'm making with Israel isn't going to be written on paper, isn't going to be chiseled in stone; This time I'm writing out the plan in them, carving it on the lining of their hearts. I'll be their God, they'll be my people.

They won't go to school to learn about me, or buy a book called God in Five Easy Lessons. They'll all get to know me firsthand, the little and the big, the small and the great. They'll get to know me by being kindly forgiven, with the slate of their sins forever wiped clean.

By coming up with a new plan, a new covenant between God and his people, God put the old plan on the shelf. And there it stays, gathering dust.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Nobody ever outgrows Scripture; the book widens and deepens with our years.

Charles Spurgeon

Solomon Wanted Wisdom: *"So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" 1 Kings 3:9*

AMBITION

Granting Your Fondest Wish

1 Kings 3 (CW)

Solomon and the Dedication of the Temple

Then Solomon awoke—and he realized it had been a dream. He returned to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the Lord's covenant and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he gave a feast for all his court. The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

Solomon answered, "You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

"Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have

chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both riches and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life." Then Solomon awoke—and he realized it had been a dream.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

As in paradise, God walks in the Holy Scriptures, seeking man.

Saint Ambrose

One Act of Wrongdoing Can Lead to a Life of Misery: *"In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. But David remained in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing."*
2 Samuel 11:2

ANATOMY OF AN AFFAIR

Fidelity to Duty is the Greatest Deterrent to Sin

2 Samuel 11 (NIV)

David, Neglected Duty, and Bathsheba

In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. But David remained in Jerusalem.

One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" Then David sent messengers to get her.

She came to him, and he slept with her. Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house.

When David was told, "Uriah did not go home," he asked him, "Haven't you just come from a distance? Why didn't you go home?" Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!" Then David said to him, "Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next.

At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home.

In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. In it he wrote, "Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die."

So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. When the men of the city

came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died.

Joab sent David a full account of the battle. The messenger said to David, "The men overpowered us and came out against us in the open, but we drove them back to the entrance to the city gate. Then the archers shot arrows at your servants from the wall, and some of the king's men died. Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead."

David told the messenger, "Say this to Joab: `Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.' Say this to encourage Joab."

When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

It Pays to Serve Jesus: *"From inside this great fish Jonah prayed to the Lord, "I cried out for you to save me and you heard me. From the tomb of the dead, I called for help and you answered me. . . . Then the Lord spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah up on the beach." Jonah 2:2*

APPREHENSION

Nothing Cures Guilt Like Obedience to God's Will

Jonah 2 (CW)

Jonah, the Whale, and Eventual Obedience

From inside this great fish Jonah prayed to the Lord, "I cried out for you to save me and you heard me. From the tomb of the dead, I called for help and you answered me. You had me thrown into the sea and let me sink to its very depths. The mighty waves rolled over me, and the waters were all around me. I said, `My end has come, but I will reach out in faith and look one more time toward your holy Temple.'

The waters came over me and I thought death was near. The sea surrounded me, and seaweed wrapped around my head. I sank into the sea like a person falling into a pit. I went down past the base of earth's mountains, down to their roots. There was no escape. But, Lord, you saved me through this great fish. You heard my prayer and brought me up from the deep. When I felt my life slipping away, Lord, I prayed to

you, and my prayer reached your heavenly Sanctuary. You heard me and saved me from death. Those who turn from you to other gods are disloyal and forfeit the right to your grace. With a song of thanksgiving and praise I renew my oath of loyalty and obedience. Salvation can only come from the Lord!"

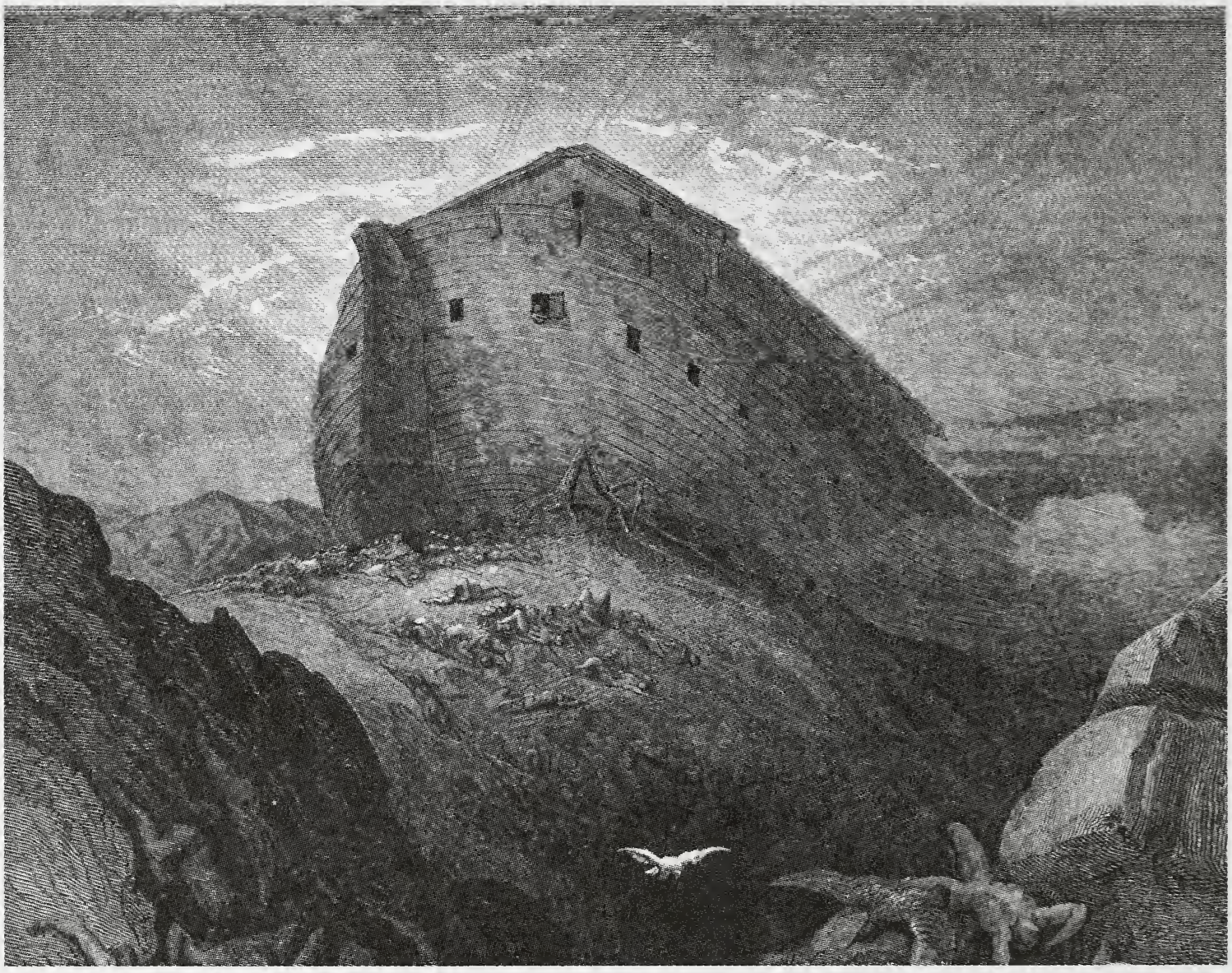
Then the Lord spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah up on the beach.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Be astounded that God should have written to us.

Antony of Egypt



Noah Focused on the Rainbow of Promise and Not Past Calamities: *"In that day you will say: "I will praise you, O LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." Isaiah 12:2*

ATTITUDE

An Attitude of Gratitude

Isaiah 12 (NIV)

The Joy of Salvation

In that day you will say: "I will praise you, O LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me.

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

In that day you will say: "Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

How Babel and Backsliding Happened: *"Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them." Hosea 14:19*

BACKSLIDING

Sliding Back Begins With Small Acts

Hosea 14 (NIV)

Hosea on Backsliding

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips.

"I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots; his young shoots will grow. His splendor will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon. Men will dwell again in his shade. He will flourish like the grain. He will blossom like a vine, and his fame will be like the wine from Lebanon.

O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? I will answer him and care for him. I am like a green pine tree; your fruitfulness comes from me."

Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

The gospel is not only the most important message in all of history; it is the only essential message in all of history.

Jerry Bridges

Nothing Strengthens the Mind and Builds Character Like Reading the Word: *"You're going to find that there will be times when people will have no stomach for solid teaching, but will fill up on spiritual junk food—catchy opinions that tickle their fancy. They'll turn their backs on truth and chase mirages. But you—keep your eye on what you're doing; accept the hard times along with the good; keep the Message alive; do a thorough job as God's servant." 2 Timothy 4:3*

BIBLE STUDY

A Wise Rule: No Read–No Feed

2 Timothy 4 (The Msg)

Read the Word from Genesis to Revelation

I can't impress this on you too strongly. God is looking over your shoulder. Christ himself is the Judge, with the final say on everyone, living and dead. He is about to break into the open with his rule, so proclaim the Message with intensity; keep on your watch. Challenge, warn, and urge your people. Don't ever quit. Just keep it simple.

You're going to find that there will be times when people will have no stomach for solid teaching, but will fill up on spiritual junk food—catchy opinions that tickle their fancy. They'll turn their backs on truth and chase mirages. But you—keep your eye on what you're doing; accept the hard times along with the good; keep the Message alive; do a thorough job as God's servant.

You take over. I'm about to die, my life an offering on God's altar. This is the only race worth running. I've run hard right to the finish, believed all the way. All that's left now is the shouting—God's

applause! Depend on it, he's an honest judge. He'll do right not only by me, but by everyone eager for his coming.

Get here as fast as you can. Demas, chasing fads, went off to Thessalonica and left me here. Crescens is in Galatia province, Titus in Dalmatia. Luke is the only one here with me. Bring Mark with you; he'll be my right-hand man since I'm sending Tychicus to Ephesus. Bring the winter coat I left in Troas with Carpus; also the books and parchment notebooks.

Watch out for Alexander the coppersmith. Fiercely opposed to our Message, he caused no end of trouble. God will give him what he's got coming.

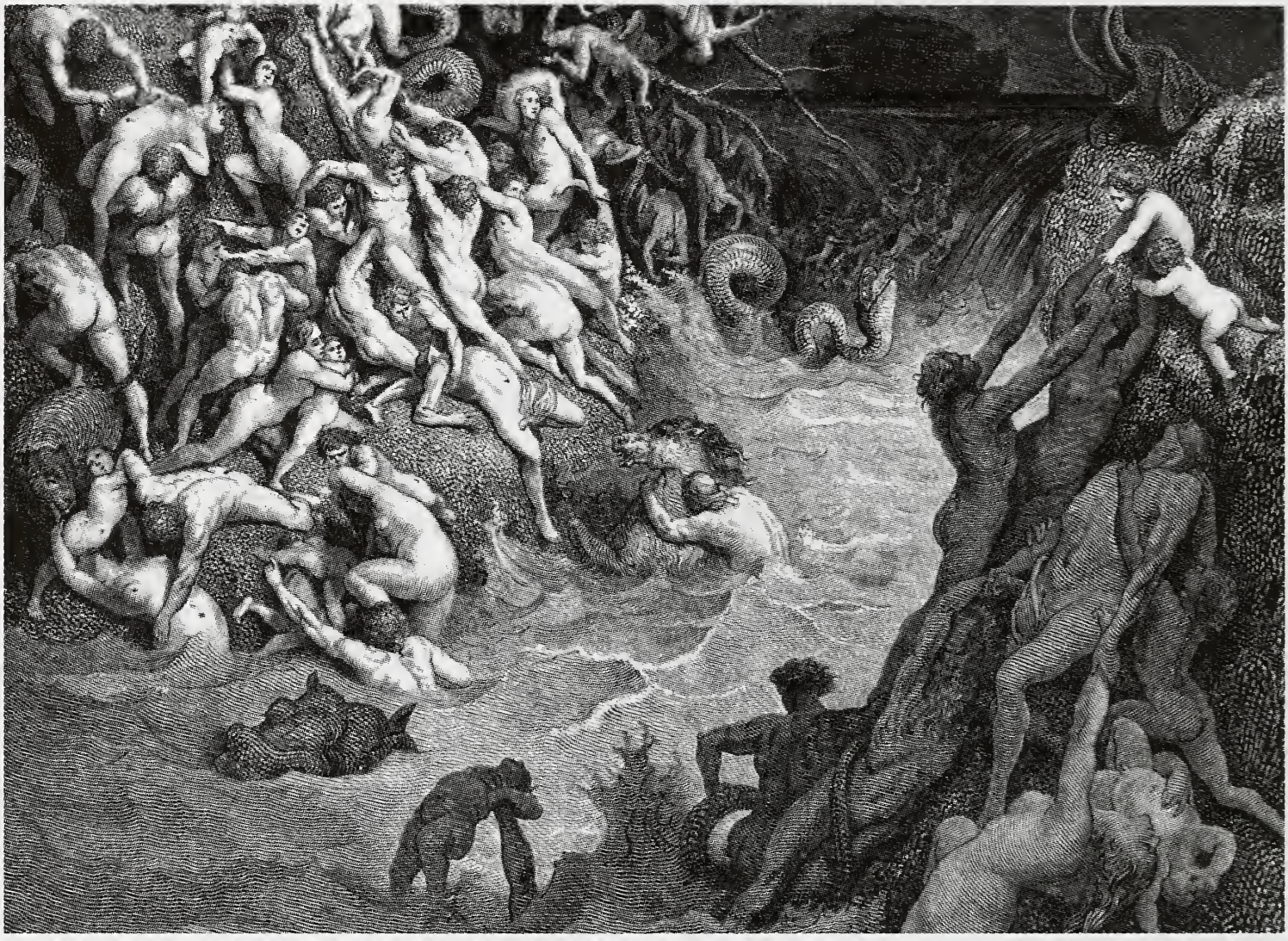
At my preliminary hearing no one stood by me. They all ran like scared rabbits. But it doesn't matter—the Master stood by me and helped me spread the Message loud and clear to those who had never heard it. I was snatched from the jaws of the lion! God's looking after me, keeping me safe in the kingdom of heaven. All praise to him, praise forever! Oh, yes!

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

A Bible that's falling apart probably belongs to someone who isn't.

Christian Johnson



God Steps In: *The LORD then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. Take with you seven of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and two of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, and also seven of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made." Genesis 7:1*

CALAMITY

Calamity Can Lead to New Beginnings

Genesis 7 (NIV)

The Account of the Flood

The LORD then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. Take with you seven of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and two of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, and also seven of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made." And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him.

Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, male

and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah. And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth.

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark. They had with them every wild animal according to its kind, all livestock according to their kinds, every creature that moves along the ground according to its kind and every bird according to its kind, everything with wings. Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them came to Noah and entered the ark. The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD shut him in.

For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than twenty feet.

Every living thing that moved on the earth perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nos-

trils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; men and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.

The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Jesus Outlines the Secret of True Happiness: *"If you hold on to these values, you will be the salt of the world. But if you let go of these values, you'll be like tasteless salt. What good is tasteless salt? The only thing you can do with it is to throw it out on the road to walk on." Matthew 5:13*

CHARACTER

With Care, Develop the Core of Who You Are

Matthew 5 (CW)

Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount

Then He (Jesus) shared with them all the values of His kingdom. He said, "Happiness comes from having the right attitude. If you feel your need of God and trust Him, you have the kingdom of God within you. Happiness comes from grieving when you sin. Confess your sins and you will be forgiven and peace will spring up in your soul. Happiness comes from being eager to listen and obey. When you acknowledge God as the source of life and abilities, you will feel blessed. One day, people like this will fill the whole earth. Happiness comes from loving to do what is right. Those who do right will have an inner satisfaction that nothing else can give. Happiness comes from being kind, considerate and forgiving. People will remember your mercy and they will return the same to you. Happiness comes to those with pure thoughts and motives. Such people will one day have the

privilege of seeing God face to face. Happiness comes from being a peacemaker, for such are God's children. Happiness even comes from being persecuted for doing what's right. Just remember that no matter what happens, your place in heaven is already secured.

Strangely enough, you'll find yourself blessed even when people insult you, persecute you and lie about you because you have accepted me. When this happens, be glad, because it shows that your name is written in heaven and that your reward will be waiting for you there. Remember, the prophets were treated no differently.

If you hold on to these values, you will be the salt of the world. But if you let go of these values, you'll be like tasteless salt. What good is tasteless salt? The only thing you can do with it is to throw it out on the road to walk on.

With these values you'll be like a city built on a hill, visible to everyone who passes by. You know that people don't light a candle to hide it, but they put it in a candle holder so everyone in the house can benefit from the light. This is what you should do with your life. Live in such a way that others will see the moral values you have and then praise God when they accept them.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

One who uses the Bible as his guide never loses his sense of direction.

Author Unknown

Good and Bad Choices: *"Tell wisdom, 'I love you; you're my very own sister.' Tell understanding, 'You're my dearest cousin.' Both of them will keep you from falling into adultery and from giving in to the charms of your neighbor's wife." Proverbs 7:4*

CHOICES

Choices Lead to Actions Lead to Character Leads to Destiny

Proverbs 7 (CW)

Wise Words on Morality

My son, follow your father's advice and hold on to what he has told you. Follow carefully what he has said and you'll never regret it. Guard his teachings as you would your own eyes. Tie them like a string around your finger and write them on your heart forever. Tell wisdom, "I love you; you're my very own sister." Tell understanding, "You're my dearest cousin." Both of them will keep you from falling into adultery and from giving in to the charms of your neighbor's wife.

One day as I was looking out the window of my house, I saw a group of young men and noticed one doing something really stupid. As the group split up to go home, the youth walked by the house of a certain woman. It was early evening, as the day was fading and night was settling in. Out came the scantily-dressed woman, intent on seducing him. She spoke loudly, was crude in her manners and acted like a

prostitute. She looked like those who walk the streets in certain sections of town.

She grabbed him, kissed him and then said brazenly, "I've gone to the temple today and offered my sacrifice and have some lamb's meat left over. When I came home and looked out the window, I saw you, the one I've been admiring. Now you're here beside me. Come on in! I have a nice place just waiting for you. I have the latest from Egypt and many other things you need to see. I have a soft king-size bed, perfumed and waiting. Come on in, and we can make love all night long. Let's enjoy ourselves! My husband is out of town; he has gone to another country. He is searching for places to invest his money, so he won't be back for a month."

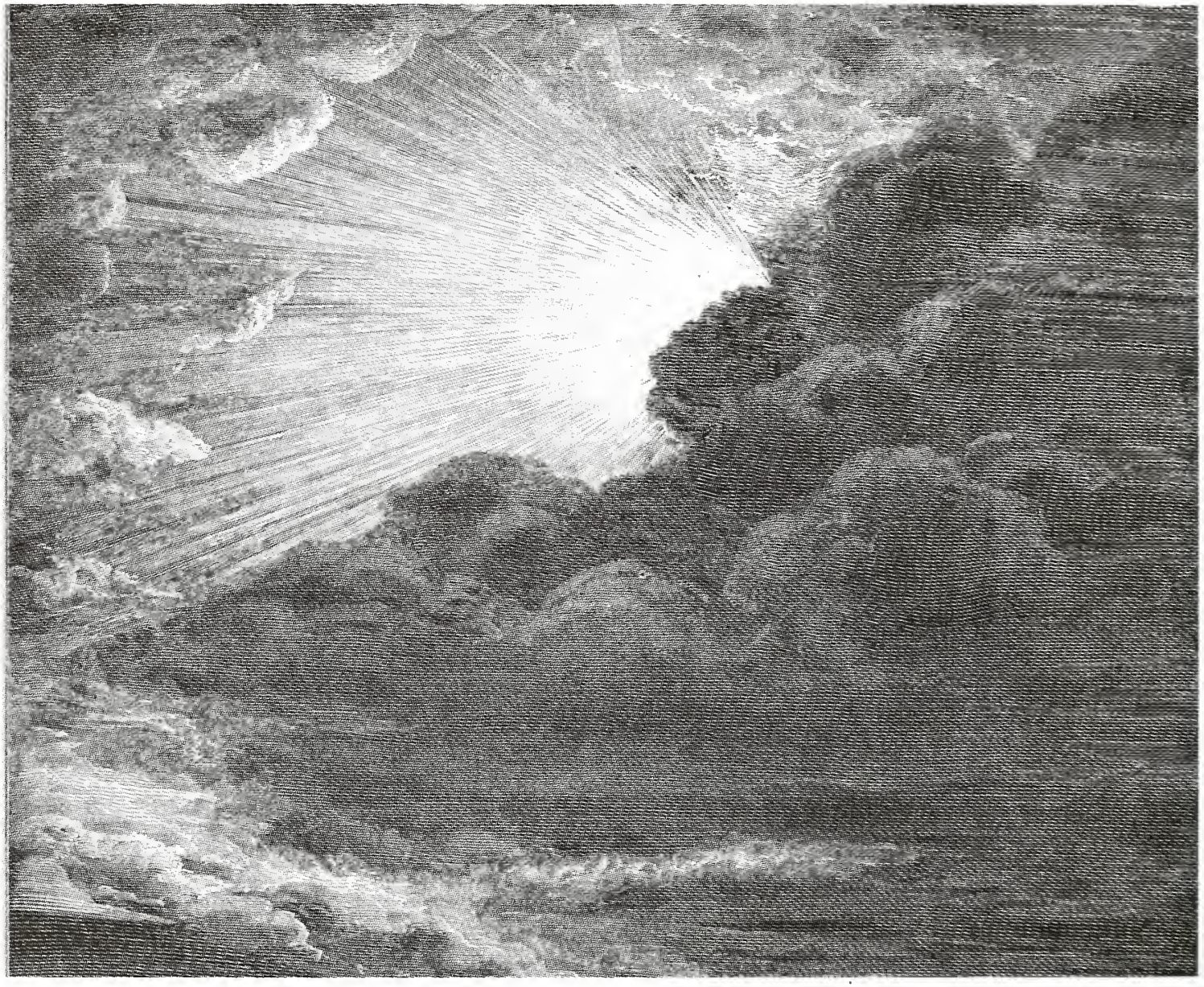
With this kind of talk she caused him to yield and with flattery she seduced him. At first he hesitated, then he followed her. Like a dumb animal being led to the slaughter, he let her take his hand and lead him into her house. Like a harmless buck, he stepped into a trap and didn't know it. But the arrow of the hunter will pierce his heart. Like an innocent bird he flew into the net, unaware that when the husband comes home, it may cost him his life.

Now, my son, listen to me and pay attention to what I'm telling you. Don't let such a woman play on your emotions and turn your heart away from that which is good. Don't follow her as if she were someone special.She has seduced many men; you're not the only one. And don't think you'll get away with it without paying the price. Her

house is like a highway; you will find yourself traveling a road you'll wish you weren't on, which leads to death.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



Christ, the Center of the Universe, Wants to be Your Center: *"By his Son, God created the world in the beginning, and it will all belong to the Son at the end. This Son perfectly mirrors God, and is stamped with God's nature. He holds everything together by what he says—powerful words!" Hebrews 1:2*

CHRIST-CENTERED

Christ Worthy of Adoration

Hebrews 1 (The Msg)

Christ Deserves Your Service and Praise

Going through a long line of prophets, God has been addressing our ancestors in different ways for centuries. Recently he spoke to us directly through his Son. By his Son, God created the world in the beginning, and it will all belong to the Son at the end. This Son perfectly mirrors God, and is stamped with God's nature. He holds everything together by what he says—powerful words!

After he finished the sacrifice for sins, the Son took his honored place high in the heavens right alongside God, far higher than any angel in rank and rule. Did God ever say to an angel, "You're my Son; today I celebrate you"? Or, "I'm his Father, he's my Son"? When he presents his honored Son to the world, he says, "All angels must worship him."

Regarding angels he says, the messengers are winds, the servants are tongues of fire. But he says to the Son, you're God, and on the throne

for good; your rule makes everything right. You love it when things are right; you hate it when things are wrong. That is why God, your God, poured fragrant oil on your head, marking you out as king, far above your dear companions.

And again to the Son, You, Master, started it all, laid earth's foundations, then crafted the stars in the sky. Earth and sky will wear out, but not you; they become threadbare like an old coat; You'll fold them up like a worn-out cloak, and lay them away on the shelf. But you'll stay the same, year after year; you'll never fade, you'll never wear out.

And did he ever say anything like this to an angel? Sit alongside me here on my throne until I make your enemies a stool for your feet. Isn't it obvious that all angels are sent to help out with those lined up to receive salvation?

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand.

Mark Twain

God is Planning Exciting Things for Believers: *"On signal from that trumpet from heaven, the dead will be up and out of their graves, beyond the reach of death, never to die again. At the same moment and in the same way, we'll all be changed. In the resurrection scheme of things, this has to happen: everything perishable taken off the shelves and replaced by the imperishable, this mortal replaced by the immortal."*
1 Corinthians 15:52

COMING CHANGE

Remember We Are Getting New Bodies

1 Corinthians 15 (The Msg)

Resurrection and Change

The first thing I did was place before you what was placed so emphatically before me: that the Messiah died for our sins, exactly as Scripture tells it; that he was buried; that he was raised from death on the third day, again exactly as Scripture says; that he presented himself alive to Peter, then to his closest followers, and later to more than five hundred of his followers all at the same time, most of them still around (although a few have since died); that he then spent time with James and the rest of those he commissioned to represent him; and that he finally presented himself alive to me.

Now, let me ask you something profound yet troubling. If you became believers because you trusted the proclamation that Christ is alive, risen from the dead, how can you let people say that there is no such thing as a resurrection? If there's no resurrection, there's no living Christ. And face it—if there's no resurrection for Christ, everything we've told you is smoke and mirrors, and everything you've staked your

life on is smoke and mirrors. Not only that, but we would be guilty of telling a string of barefaced lies about God, all these affidavits we passed on to you verifying that God raised up Christ—sheer fabrications, if there's no resurrection.

If corpses can't be raised, then Christ wasn't, because he was indeed dead. And if Christ wasn't raised, then all you're doing is wandering about in the dark, as lost as ever. It's even worse for those who died hoping in Christ and resurrection, because they're already in their graves. If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot. But the truth is that Christ has been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those who are going to leave the cemeteries.

There is a nice symmetry in this: Death initially came by a man, and resurrection from death came by a man. Everybody dies in Adam; everybody comes alive in Christ. But we have to wait our turn: Christ is first, then those with him at his Coming, the grand consummation when, after crushing the opposition, he hands over his kingdom to God the Father. He won't let up until the last enemy is down—and the very last enemy is death!

But let me tell you something wonderful, a mystery I'll probably never fully understand. We're not all going to die—but we are all going to be changed. You hear a blast to end all blasts from a trumpet, and in the time that you look up and blink your eyes—it's over. On signal from that trumpet from heaven, the dead will be up and out of their

graves, beyond the reach of death, never to die again. At the same moment and in the same way, we'll all be changed. In the resurrection scheme of things, this has to happen: everything perishable taken off the shelves and replaced by the imperishable, this mortal replaced by the immortal. Then the saying will come true: Death swallowed by triumphant Life! Who got the last word, oh, Death? Oh, Death, who's afraid of you now?

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

God Gave Ten Universal Principles to Live By: *"Then from the top of the mountain God spoke to Moses and the people, 'I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and set you free.'" Exodus 20:2*

COMMANDMENTS

Master the Ten Universal Principles of Life

Exodus 20 (CW)

The Ten Commandments

Then from the top of the mountain God spoke to Moses and the people, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and set you free. [Command 1] You are not to look to people or things as gods or to love them as much as you love me. [Command 2] You are not to manufacture idols for yourselves after things in heaven, on earth or in the sea. Don't bow down to idols or serve them. I care for you and such practices will only hurt you and your children, who will reap the consequences of your sins down to the third and fourth generations. But the children of parents who love me and keep my commandments will benefit from such love for many generations to come. [Command 3] You are not to dishonor me by using my name as a curse. Those who misuse my name will not be guiltless in the final judgment.

[Command 4] Remember to observe the Sabbath because I have set it apart as holy. There are six days in the week for you to earn a living. But the seventh day of the week belongs to the Lord your God. On that day you are to do no work–you, your sons or daughters, your male or female servants, your animals or any aliens living among you. Because in six days, I, the Lord your God, created the earth, the sky, the seas and everything in them, and on the seventh day I rested in the joy of having made it all. That's why I blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy, so you can rest and rejoice with me. [Command 5] You are not to dishonor your parents. Respect your father and mother, and I will bless you with long life in the land I'm about to give you. [Command 6] You are not to kill anyone or hurt them. [Command 7] You are not to commit adultery or sexually abuse anyone. [Command 8] You are not to take what doesn't belong to you. [Command 9] You are not to lie, deceive or accuse others falsely. [Command 10] You are not to be jealous or covet another man's house, his wife, his servants, his cattle or anything else that he has."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

No one ever graduates from Bible study until he meets the author face-to-face.

E. T. Harris

God Speaks to His People: *"The fact is, God, the Master, does nothing without first telling his prophets the whole story." Amos 3:7*

COMMUNICATION

God Does Communicate

Amos 3 (The Msg)

Amos and the Spirit of Prophecy

Listen to this, Israel. God is calling you to account—and I mean all of you, everyone connected with the family that he delivered out of Egypt. Listen!

"Out of all the families on earth, I picked you. Therefore, because of your special calling, I'm holding you responsible for all your sins."

Do two people walk hand in hand if they aren't going to the same place? Does a lion roar in the forest if there's no carcass to devour? Does a young lion growl with pleasure if he hasn't caught his supper? Does a bird fall to the ground if it hasn't been hit with a stone? Does a trap spring shut if nothing trips it?

When the alarm goes off in the city, aren't people alarmed? And when disaster strikes the city, doesn't God stand behind it?

The fact is, God, the Master, does nothing without first telling his prophets the whole story.

The lion has roared—who isn't frightened? God has spoken—what prophet can keep quiet?

Announce to the forts of Assyria, announce to the forts of Egypt—Tell them, "Gather on the Samaritan mountains, take a good, hard look: what a snake pit of brutality and terror! They can't—or won't—do one thing right." God said so. "They stockpile violence and blight. Therefore"—this is God's Word—"an enemy will surround the country. He'll strip you of your power and plunder your forts."

God's Message: "In the same way that a shepherd trying to save a lamb from a lion manages to recover just a pair of legs or the scrap of an ear, so will little be saved of the Israelites who live in Samaria—A couple of old chairs at most, the broken leg of a table.

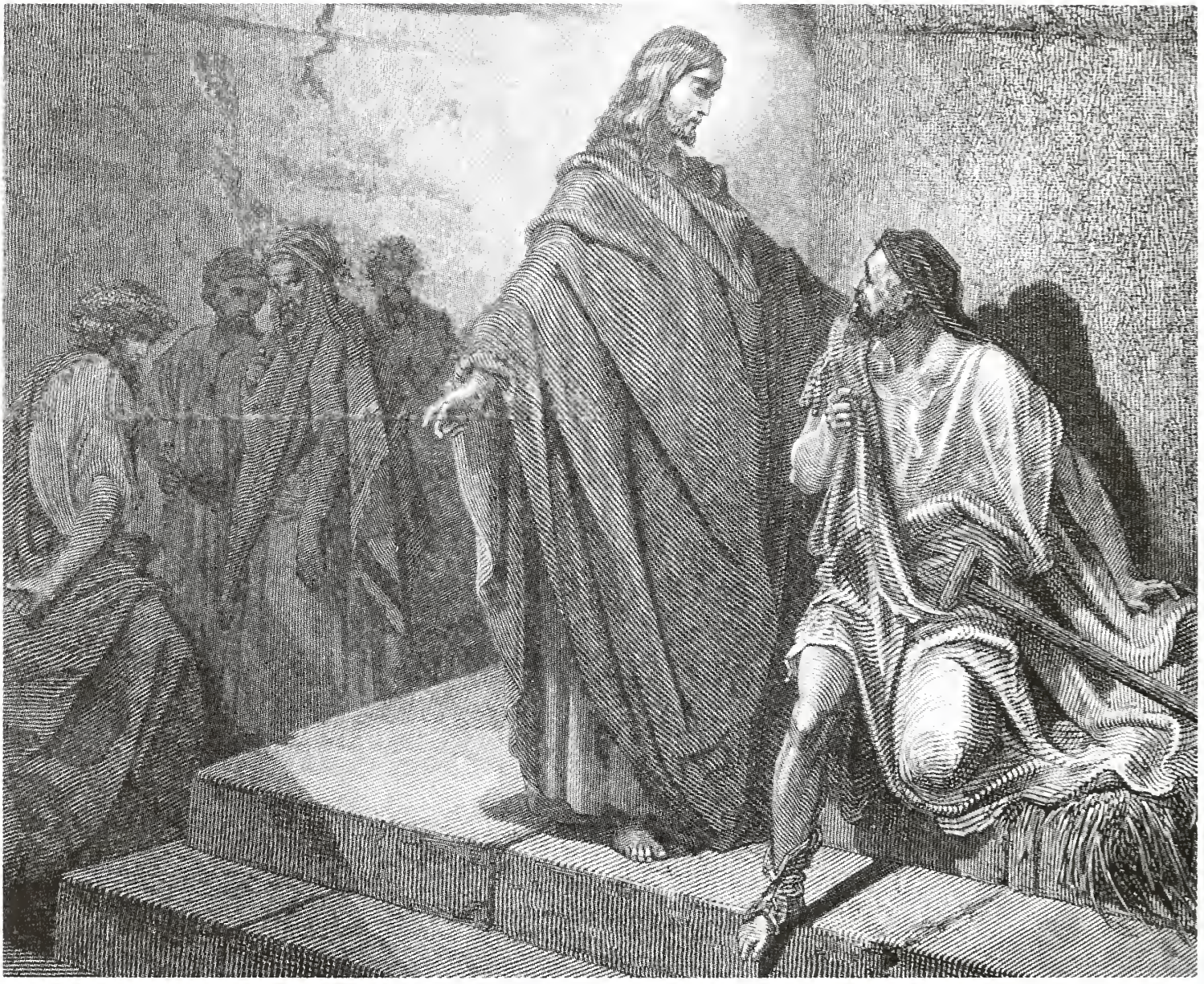
"Listen and bring witness against Jacob's family"—this is God's Word, God-of-the-Angel-Armies!

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

God the Father is the giver of Holy Scripture; God the Son is the theme of Holy Scripture; and God the Spirit is the author, authenticator, and interpreter of Holy Scripture.

Anonymous



God Gave Us Speech to Use to His Glory: *"All of us make mistakes and say things we shouldn't. If someone can control his tongue and never make a mistake in what he says or how he says it, he's a perfect man and able to keep his whole body in check." James 3:2*

COMMUNICATIONAL WISDOM

Talk, Write, Act Wisely Because Everything Conveys a Message

James 3 (CW)

The Power and Importance of Speech

Another thing I want to mention to you, my brothers, is this. Don't think that everyone who can lead or teach should be put into office. God expects more of leaders and teachers than of others. Their tongues are judged with greater strictness than the tongues of others.

All of us make mistakes and say things we shouldn't. If someone can control his tongue and never make a mistake in what he says or how he says it, he's a perfect man and able to keep his whole body in check.

So we should control our tongues, just as a man controls a horse. He puts a bit in its mouth and controls its whole body, and the horse obeys him. Or consider a ship. It's pushed along by strong winds fill-

ing its sails, yet it's controlled by a very small rudder which makes it go wherever the captain wants it to go.

That's how important the tongue is. Though small, it can do a lot of damage. It only takes a little flame to set a whole forest on fire. The tongue is just like that. It can inflame emotions and create a world of evil. It can create more bad feelings than you already had if you keep talking about how hurt you are. The tongue can set a whole atmosphere on fire, as if it had been done by the devil himself.

Men have been able to tame all kinds of creatures, such as wild animals, birds, snakes and even large fish. But one thing man hasn't been able to tame is his own tongue. It can cause the most uncontrollable evil in all creation and spread the deadliest poison.

If not disciplined and controlled, one minute it can praise and bless God and the next minute it can curse those created in God's image. All too often words of blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers, these things shouldn't be. Can both good and bad-tasting water come out of the same spring? Can a fig tree grow olives? Can a grapevine grow figs? The answer is obvious. Neither can a bad spring give you good water!

If you're wise enough to understand what I'm talking about, then prove it by your uplifting conversation and your good deeds and do it without boasting about how good you are. Good deeds done in humility are the fruit of wisdom. If you have any bitterness, anger or jealousy in your heart, I hope you won't have the audacity to tell people how

committed to the Lord you are, because it won't take long for them to find out that you're lying. That will discredit the gospel truth quicker than anything I know.

The supposed wisdom that says you can go around venting your anger and still be a Christian is not from above. It's devilish and certainly not consistent with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Wherever people are showing anger and jealousy, you'll find confusion and all kinds of other evils.

The wisdom that comes from above is first of all pure, then peace-loving, gentle, easy to get along with, compassionate, full of good works and free from partiality and hypocrisy. A harvest of righteousness can come only from seeds of kindness sown in peace by those who love peace.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Habakkuk Asks Questions: *"God, how long do I have to cry out for help before you listen? How many times do I have to yell, "Help! Murder! Police!" before you come to the rescue? Habakkuk 1:2*

COMPLAINING

There is a Right Way to Unburden Our Hearts

Habakkuk 1 (The Msg)

Questioning God's Justice

The problem as God gave Habakkuk to see it: God, how long do I have to cry out for help before you listen? How many times do I have to yell, "Help! Murder! Police!" before you come to the rescue?

Why do you force me to look at evil, stare trouble in the face day after day? Anarchy and violence break out, quarrels and fights all over the place. Law and order fall to pieces. Justice is a joke. The wicked have the righteous hamstrung and stand justice on its head.

"Look around at the godless nations. Look long and hard. Brace yourself for a shock. Something's about to take place and you're going to find it hard to believe.

I'm about to raise up Babylonians to punish you, Babylonians, fierce and ferocious—World-conquering Babylon, grabbing up nations right and left, A dreadful and terrible people, making up its own rules

as it goes. Their horses run like the wind, attack like bloodthirsty wolves. A stampede of galloping horses thunders out of nowhere. They descend like vultures circling in on carrion. They're out to kill. Death is on their minds. They collect victims like squirrels gathering nuts. They mock kings, poke fun at generals, Spit on forts, and leave them in the dust. They'll all be blown away by the wind. Brazen in sin, they call strength their god."

God, you're from eternity, aren't you? Holy God, we aren't going to die, are we? God, you chose Babylonians for your judgment work? Rock-Solid God, you gave them the job of discipline? But you can't be serious! You can't condone evil! So why don't you do something about this? Why are you silent now? This outrage! Evil men swallow up the righteous and you stand around and watch!

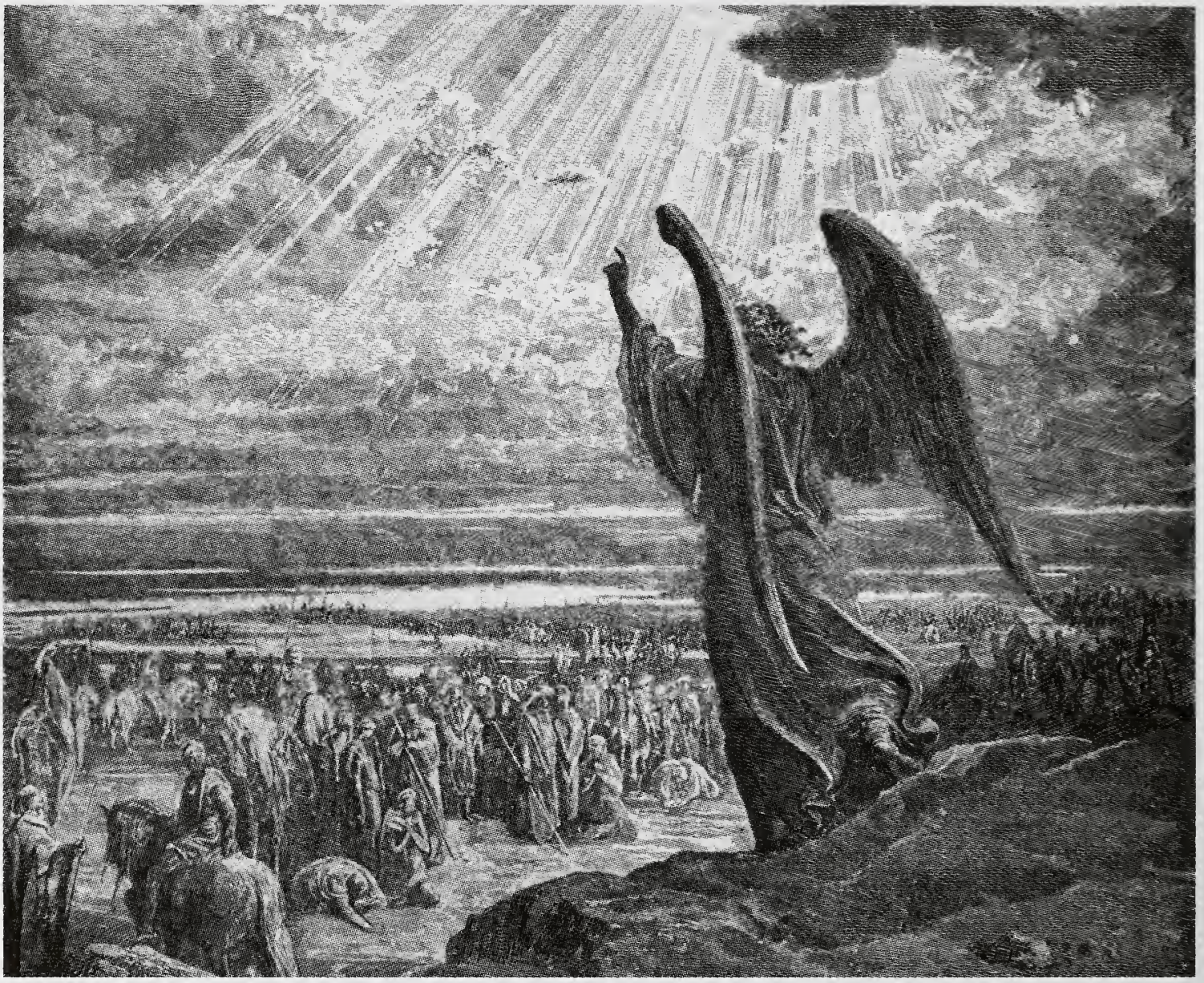
Are you going to let this go on and on? Will you let this Babylonian fisherman fish like a weekend angler, killing people as if they're nothing but fish?

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

The squeaking wheel doesn't always get the grease. Sometimes it gets replaced.

Anonymous



Joshua was Confident in God's Presence: *"Strength! Courage! You are going to lead this people to inherit the land that I promised to give their ancestors. Give it everything you have, heart and soul. Make sure you carry out The Revelation that Moses commanded you, every bit of it." Joshua 1:6*

CONFIDENCE

True Self-Confidence is Found in Doing God's Will

Joshua 1 (The Msg)

Joshua's Charge and Follow-Through

After the death of Moses the servant of God, God spoke to Joshua, Moses' assistant: "Moses my servant is dead. Get going. Cross this Jordan River, you and all the people. Cross to the country I'm giving to the People of Israel. I'm giving you every square inch of the land you set your foot on—just as I promised Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon east to the Great River, the Euphrates River—all the Hittite country—and then west to the Great Sea. It's all yours. All your life, no one will be able to hold out against you. In the same way I was with Moses, I'll be with you. I won't give up on you; I won't leave you.

Strength! Courage! You are going to lead this people to inherit the land that I promised to give their ancestors. Give it everything you have, heart and soul. Make sure you carry out The Revelation that

Moses commanded you, every bit of it. Don't get off track, either left or right, so as to make sure you get to where you're going. And don't for a minute let this Book of The Revelation be out of mind. Ponder and meditate on it day and night, making sure you practice everything written in it. Then you'll get where you're going; then you'll succeed. Haven't I commanded you? Strength! Courage! Don't be timid; don't get discouraged. God, your God, is with you every step you take."

Then Joshua gave orders to the people's leaders: "Go through the camp and give this order to the people: 'Pack your bags. In three days you will cross this Jordan River to enter and take the land God, your God, is giving you to possess.' "

Then Joshua addressed the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. He said, "Remember what Moses the servant of God commanded you: God, your God, gives you rest and he gives you this land. Your wives, your children, and your livestock can stay here east of the Jordan, the country Moses gave you; but you, tough soldiers all, must cross the River in battle formation, leading your brothers, helping them until God, your God, gives your brothers a place of rest just as he has done for you. They also will take possession of the land that God, your God, is giving them. Then you will be free to return to your possession, given to you by Moses the servant of God, across the Jordan to the east."

They answered Joshua: "Everything you commanded us, we'll do. Wherever you send us, we'll go. We obeyed Moses to the letter; we'll

also obey you—we just pray that God, your God, will be with you as he was with Moses. Anyone who questions what you say and refuses to obey whatever you command him will be put to death. Strength! Courage!"

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Jeremiah was Faithful With Confrontation: *"The Lord said to me, 'Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you.'" "Now, I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant." Jeremiah 1:7*

CONFLICT

Conflict Can Not Always Be Avoided

Jeremiah 1 (NIV)

Jeremiah's Call to a Very Difficult Ministry

"The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. The word of the Lord came to him in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah, and through the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, down to the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah son of Josiah king of Judah, when the people of Jerusalem went into exile.

The word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." "Ah, Sovereign Lord," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord.

Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "Now, I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I

appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."

The word of the Lord came to me again: "What do you see?""I see a boiling pot, tilting away from the north," I answered. The Lord said to me, "From the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land. I am about to summon all the peoples of the northern kingdoms," declares the Lord. "Their kings will come and set up their thrones in the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem; they will come against all her surrounding wall and against all the towns of Judah. I will pronounce my judgments on my people because of their wickedness in forsaking me, in burning incense to other gods and in worshiping what their hands have made."Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything; but still I can do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do.

Helen Keller

Jesus Sought People Who Were Open to Conversion: *"Unless a man's spiritual nature is born again through the Holy Spirit and he is willing to be baptized, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." John 3:3*

CONVERSION

When a Person Responds to the Love of God, Life Has New Meaning

John 3 (CW)

Nicodemus' Life-changing Encounter with Jesus

There was a leader among the Jews named Nicodemus who was a highly respected Pharisee. He wanted to see Jesus, so he made it a point to see Him at night.

Nicodemus said, "Teacher, we know that God has sent you because no one can work miracles like you do unless God is with him."

Jesus answered, "Miracles alone are not enough evidence that the kingdom of God is here. Unless a person is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus asked, "But how can a man enter into his mother's womb a second time and be born again? How can a man who is already old start life all over again? That's impossible."

Jesus answered, "You're right. But I'm not speaking of physical birth. I'm speaking of spiritual birth. Unless a man's spiritual nature is

born again through the Holy Spirit and he is willing to be baptized, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is physical is one thing, and that which is spiritual is another. So don't be shocked when I tell you that you must be reborn before you can enter God's kingdom.

How this happens is beyond logic or ritual. It's an experience you can't explain, like the wind blowing the trees. You can see the effects of it, but you can't see the wind itself, nor do you know its origin. That's how it is with the person who is born spiritually; he can't point to something people can see and say, `This is what caused me to be different.'" Nicodemus sat there stunned. He questioned, "How can such a thing be?" Jesus said to him, "You're one of the leading minds in Israel, and you don't know what I'm talking about? I'm telling you what I know and what I've seen happen in the lives of others, and you still hesitate to believe me. Now if I'm explaining it to you with illustrations you're familiar with, like the effects of the wind, and you still can't understand it, how could you possibly understand it if I explained it to you with heavenly things you haven't seen? No one has lived in heaven and then come here to live except the Son of Man. He lived there before He was born, and He has come to make spiritual things simple.

The miracle of the new birth was taught in the Old Testament when Moses put a brass serpent on a makeshift cross and held it up for people to look at. All those bitten by snakes who looked up at it in faith were healed. The power of God symbolized by the cross overcame the

power of the snake. That power didn't come from the cross Moses made, but from the Son of God who would come and die on a cross. He will soon be lifted up between heaven and earth for all to see, and those who look to Him in faith will be healed of the snakebite of sin and will live.

For God loved the world so much that He freely gave His only Son to come here and die, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but will be given eternal life. God didn't send His Son to the world to condemn people, but to forgive them and to save them."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Solomon Shares Insight: *"Written down so we'll know how to live well and right, to understand what life means and where it's going; A manual for living, for learning what's right and just and fair; To teach the inexperienced the ropes and give our young people a grasp on reality." Proverbs 1:2*

COUNSEL

Seek Wise Insight, Advice, and Guidance

Proverbs 1 (The Msg)

Distilled Instruction for Learners

These are the wise sayings of Solomon, David's son, Israel's king—Written down so we'll know how to live well and right, to understand what life means and where it's going; A manual for living, for learning what's right and just and fair; To teach the inexperienced the ropes and give our young people a grasp on reality. There's something here also for seasoned men and women, still a thing or two for the experienced to learn—Fresh wisdom to probe and penetrate, the rhymes and reasons of wise men and women.

Start with God—the first step in learning is bowing down to God; only fools thumb their noses at such wisdom and learning. Pay close attention, friend, to what your father tells you; never forget what you learned at your mother's knee. Wear their counsel like flowers in your hair, like rings on your fingers.

Dear friend, if bad companions tempt you, don't go along with them. If they say—"Let's go out and raise some hell. Let's beat up some old man, mug some old woman. Let's pick them clean and get them ready for their funerals.

We'll load up on top-quality loot. We'll haul it home by the truckload. Join us for the time of your life! With us, it's share and share alike!"

Oh, friend, don't give them a second look; don't listen to them for a minute. They're racing to a very bad end, hurrying to ruin everything they lay hands on. Nobody robs a bank with everyone watching, Yet that's what these people are doing—they're doing themselves in. When you grab all you can get, that's what happens: the more you get, the less you are.

Lady Wisdom goes out in the street and shouts. At the town center she makes her speech. In the middle of the traffic she takes her stand. At the busiest corner she calls out: "Simpletons! How long will you wallow in ignorance? Cynics! How long will you feed your cynicism? Idiots! How long will you refuse to learn?

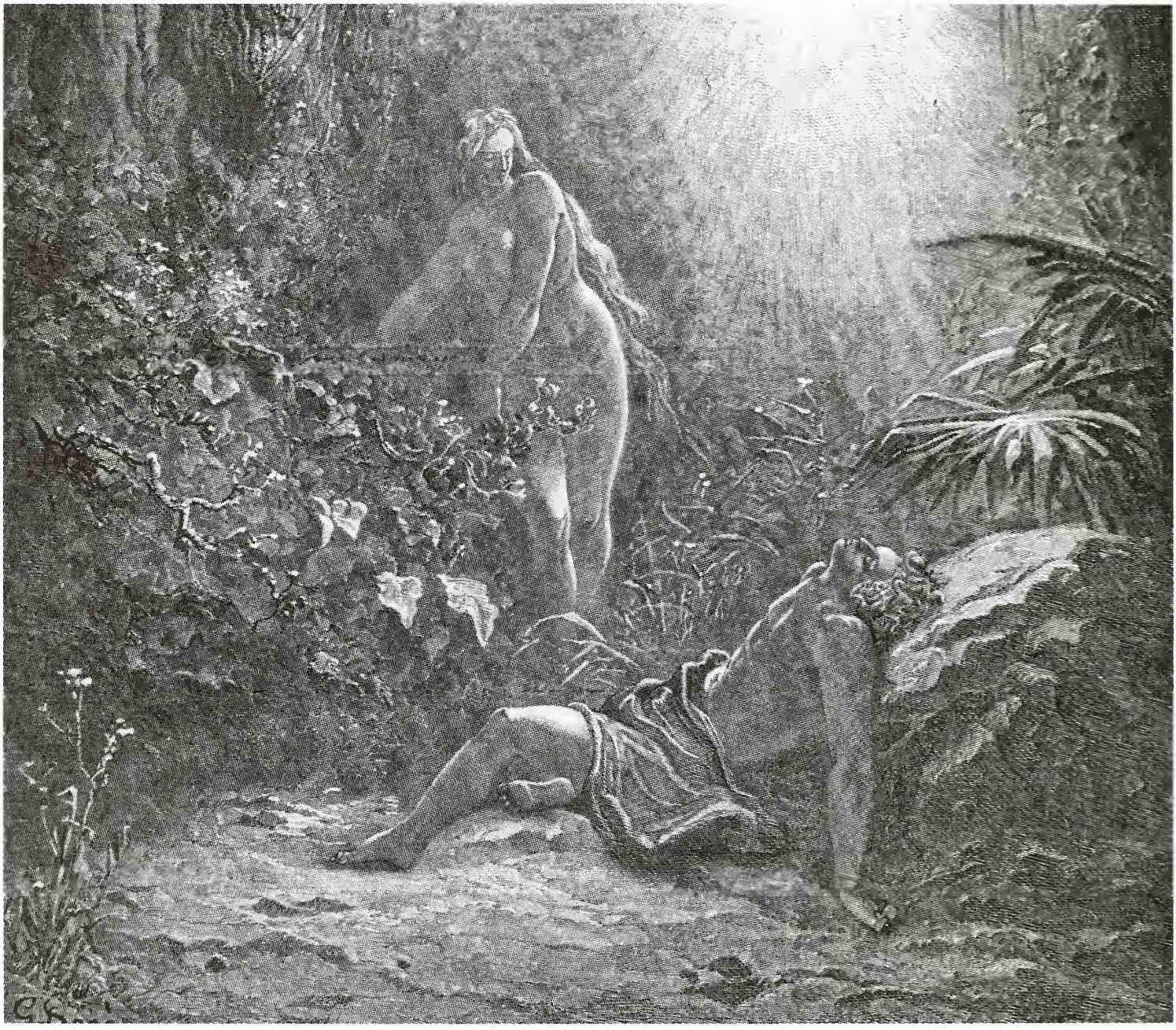
About face! I can revise your life. Look, I'm ready to pour out my spirit on you; I'm ready to tell you all I know. As it is, I've called, but you've turned a deaf ear; I've reached out to you, but you've ignored me. "Since you laugh at my counsel and make a joke of my advice, How can I take you seriously? I'll turn the tables and joke about your troubles! What if the roof falls in, and your whole life goes to pieces?

What if catastrophe strikes and there's nothing to show for your life but rubble and ashes? You'll need me then. You'll call for me, but don't expect an answer. No matter how hard you look, you won't find me. "Because you hated Knowledge and had nothing to do with the Fear-of-God, Because you wouldn't take my advice and brushed aside all my offers to train you,

Well, you've made your bed—now lie in it; you wanted your own way—now, how do you like it? Don't you see what happens, you simpletons, you idiots? Carelessness kills; complacency is murder. First pay attention to me, and then relax. Now you can take it easy—you're in good hands."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



The Creative Work of God: *"Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array." Genesis 2:1*

CREATION

God Created Everything

Genesis 1-2 (The Msg)

Seven Creative Days

First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

God spoke: "Light!" And light appeared. God saw that light was good and separated light from dark. God named the light Day, he named the dark Night. It was evening, it was morning—Day One. God spoke: "Sky! In the middle of the waters; separate water from water!" God made sky. He separated the water under sky from the water above sky. And there it was: he named sky the Heavens; It was evening, it was morning—Day Two.

God spoke: "Separate! Water-beneath-Heaven, gather into one place; Land, appear!" And there it was. God named the land Earth. He named the pooled water Ocean. God saw that it was good. God spoke: "Earth, green up! Grow all varieties of seed-bearing plants, every sort of

fruit-bearing tree." And there it was. Earth produced green seed-bearing plants, all varieties, and fruit-bearing trees of all sorts. God saw that it was good. It was evening, it was morning—Day Three.

God spoke: "Lights! Come out! Shine in Heaven's sky! Separate Day from Night. Mark seasons and days and years, Lights in Heaven's sky to give light to Earth." And there it was. God made two big lights, the larger to take charge of Day, the smaller to be in charge of Night; and he made the stars. God placed them in the heavenly sky to light up Earth and oversee Day and Night, to separate light and dark. God saw that it was good. It was evening, it was morning—Day Four.

God spoke: "Swarm, Ocean, with fish and all sea life! Birds, fly through the sky over Earth!" God created the huge whales, all the swarm of life in the waters, and every kind and species of flying birds. God saw that it was good. God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Ocean! Birds, reproduce on Earth!" It was evening, it was morning—Day Five.

God spoke: "Earth, generate life! Every sort and kind: cattle and reptiles and wild animals—all kinds." And there it was: wild animals of every kind, cattle of all kinds, every sort of reptile and bug. God saw that it was good.

God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth." God created human beings; he creat-

ed them godlike, reflecting God's nature. He created them male and female. God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

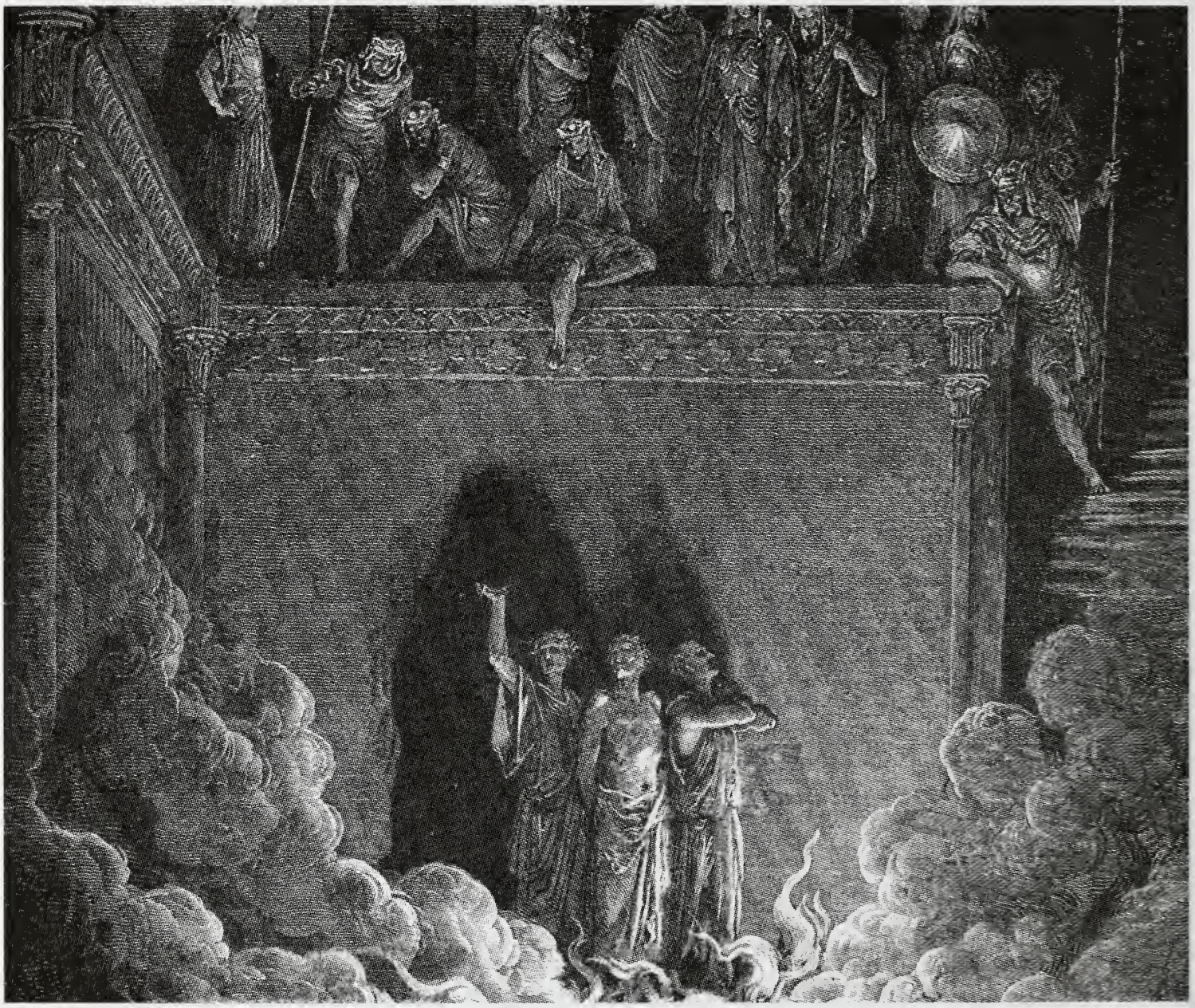
Then God said, "I've given you every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth and every kind of fruit-bearing tree, given them to you for food. To all animals and all birds, everything that moves and breathes, I give whatever grows out of the ground for food." And there it was. God looked over everything he had made; it was so good, so very good! It was evening, it was morning—Day Six.

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



The Hebrew Men Avoided Crowd Mentality: *"My dear friends, don't believe everything you hear. Carefully weigh and examine what people tell you. Not everyone who talks about God comes from God." 1 John 4:1*

CRITICAL THINKING

Nurture a Balanced Approach to Living

1 John 4 (The Msg)

Test the Spirits

My dear friends, don't believe everything you hear. Carefully weigh and examine what people tell you. Not everyone who talks about God comes from God. There are a lot of lying preachers loose in the world.

Here's how you test for the genuine Spirit of God. Everyone who confesses openly his faith in Jesus Christ—the Son of God, who came as an actual flesh-and-blood person—comes from God and belongs to God. And everyone who refuses to confess faith in Jesus has nothing in common with God. This is the spirit of antichrist that you heard was coming. Well, here it is, sooner than we thought!

My dear children, you come from God and belong to God. You have already won a big victory over those false teachers, for the Spirit in you is far stronger than anything in the world. These people belong to the Christ-denying world. They talk the world's language and the

world eats it up. But we come from God and belong to God. Anyone who knows God understands us and listens. The person who has nothing to do with God will, of course, not listen to us. This is another test for telling the Spirit of Truth from the spirit of deception.

My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn't know the first thing about God, because God is love—so you can't know him if you don't love. This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.

My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us—perfect love!

God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we're free of worry on Judgment Day—our standing in the world is identical with Christ's. There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love.

We, though, are going to love—love and be loved. First we were loved, now we love. He loved us first. If anyone boasts, "I love God," and goes right on hating his brother or sister, thinking nothing of it, he is a liar. If he won't love the person he can see, how can he love the God he can't see?

The command we have from Christ is blunt: Loving God includes loving people. You've got to love both.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Only What We Do for Christ Will Last: *"Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull." Mark 15:21-22*

CROSS AND SERVICE

Make Service to God and Humanity Your Highest Goal

Mark 15; Matthew 27; Luke 23 (NKJV)

Simon and the Supreme Act of Service

Mark 15:21-22

"Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull."

Matthew 27:32

"Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross. And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink. Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: "They divided My garments among them. And for My clothing they cast lots."

Luke 23:26

"Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

When you dig another out of his troubles, you find a place to bury your own.

Unknown

A Crucial Decision: *"Don't force me to leave you; don't make me go home. Where you go, I go; and where you live, I'll live. Your people are my people, your God is my god; where you die, I'll die, and that's where I'll be buried, so help me God—not even death itself is going to come between us!" Ruth 1:16*

DECISION MAKING

Life is Full of Crucial Decisions– Make Them Wisely

Ruth 1 (The Msg)

Ruth and Naomi in the Midst of a Calamity

Once upon a time—it was back in the days when judges led Israel—there was a famine in the land. A man from Bethlehem in Judah left home to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. The man's name was Elimelech; his wife's name was Naomi; his sons were named Mahlon and Kilion—all Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They all went to the country of Moab and settled there. Elimelech died and Naomi was left, she and her two sons. The sons took Moabite wives; the name of the first was Orpah, the second Ruth. They lived there in Moab for the next ten years. But then the two brothers, Mahlon and Kilion, died. Now the woman was left without either her young men or her husband.

One day she got herself together, she and her two daughters-in-law, to leave the country of Moab and set out for home; she had heard that

God had been pleased to visit his people and give them food. And so she started out from the place she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law with her, on the road back to the land of Judah.

After a short while on the road, Naomi told her two daughters-in-law, "Go back. Go home and live with your mothers. And may God treat you as graciously as you treated your deceased husbands and me. May God give each of you a new home and a new husband!" She kissed them and they cried openly. They said, "No, we're going on with you to your people."

But Naomi was firm: "Go back, my dear daughters. Why would you come with me? Do you suppose I still have sons in my womb who can become your future husbands? Go back, dear daughters—on your way, please! I'm too old to get a husband. Why, even if I said, 'There's still hope!' and this very night got a man and had sons, can you imagine being satisfied to wait until they were grown? Would you wait that long to get married again? No, dear daughters; this is a bitter pill for me to swallow—more bitter for me than for you. God has dealt me a hard blow."

Again they cried openly. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye; but Ruth embraced her and held on.

Naomi said, "Look, your sister-in-law is going back home to live with her own people and gods; go with her."

But Ruth said, "Don't force me to leave you; don't make me go home. Where you go, I go; and where you live, I'll live. Your people are

my people, your God is my god; where you die, I'll die, and that's where I'll be buried, so help me God—not even death itself is going to come between us!"

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Everyone Needs a Defense: *"The God of Judah rebukes you. The God who lives in Jerusalem will destroy you. This man represents all men and women who have been snatched from the fire." Zachariah 3:2*

DEFENSE

If You Accept Christ as Savior, He Will Be Your Defense

Zachariah 3 (CW)

Joshua the High Priest
Accused by Satan–Defended by Christ

In the fourth vision I saw Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord as the representative of the people. Beside him stood Satan accusing him of sin. I heard the Lord say to Satan, "The God of Judah rebukes you. The God who lives in Jerusalem will destroy you. This man represents all men and women who have been snatched from the fire."

I looked and noticed that as Joshua the high priest stood before the Angel, he was dressed in filthy clothes, covered with the sins of God's people. The Lord looked at him and then turned to the angels standing nearby and said, "Take off the filthy clothes he's wearing." Then He said to Joshua, "I have accepted your repentance and taken away your sin. I will give you new clothes to wear." The Lord turned to the angels

standing near Him and said, "Put a clean turban on his head and dress him in a clean robe." Then they brought in a white turban and a white robe and put them on him as the Lord had said.

Then the Angel of the Lord said to Joshua, "If you obey me and live by my commandments, then these new priestly garments will continue to be yours and you will be in charge of my Temple. I will hear your prayers and one day you will stand in my presence as these angels do."

Again the Lord spoke to Joshua, saying, "Listen to me! You and your priests need to pay attention to what I have to say. You stand in the place of my Servant who is to come. He is the Branch of the house of David that I've been telling you about, the One I promised to send.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

We must learn to stand alone and depend wholly upon God.

Ellen White

Suddenly! Deliverance Can Come: *"Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. 'Quick, get up!' he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists." Acts 12:7*

DELIVERANCE

In Times of Danger the Believer Can Always Count on Christ

Acts 12 (NIV)

Peter's Prison Deliverance

It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating."

When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

"You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the brothers about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Jesus Cares for His People: *"I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own sheep know me. In the same way, the Father knows me and I know the Father. I put the sheep before myself, sacrificing myself if necessary. You need to know that I have other sheep in addition to those in this pen." John 10:14*

DEPENDABLE GOD

A Relationship with Christ Insures Heavens' Resources

John 10 (The Msg)

Jesus the Good Shepherd

"Let me set this before you as plainly as I can. If a person climbs over or through the fence of a sheep pen instead of going through the gate, you know he's up to no good—a sheep rustler! The shepherd walks right up to the gate. The gatekeeper opens the gate to him and the sheep recognize his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he gets them all out, he leads them and they follow because they are familiar with his voice. They won't follow a stranger's voice but will scatter because they aren't used to the sound of it."

Jesus told this simple story, but they had no idea what he was talking about. So he tried again. "I'll be explicit, then. I am the Gate for the sheep. All those others are up to no good—sheep stealers, every one of them. But the sheep didn't listen to them. I am the Gate. Anyone who

goes through me will be cared for—will freely go in and out, and find pasture. A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.

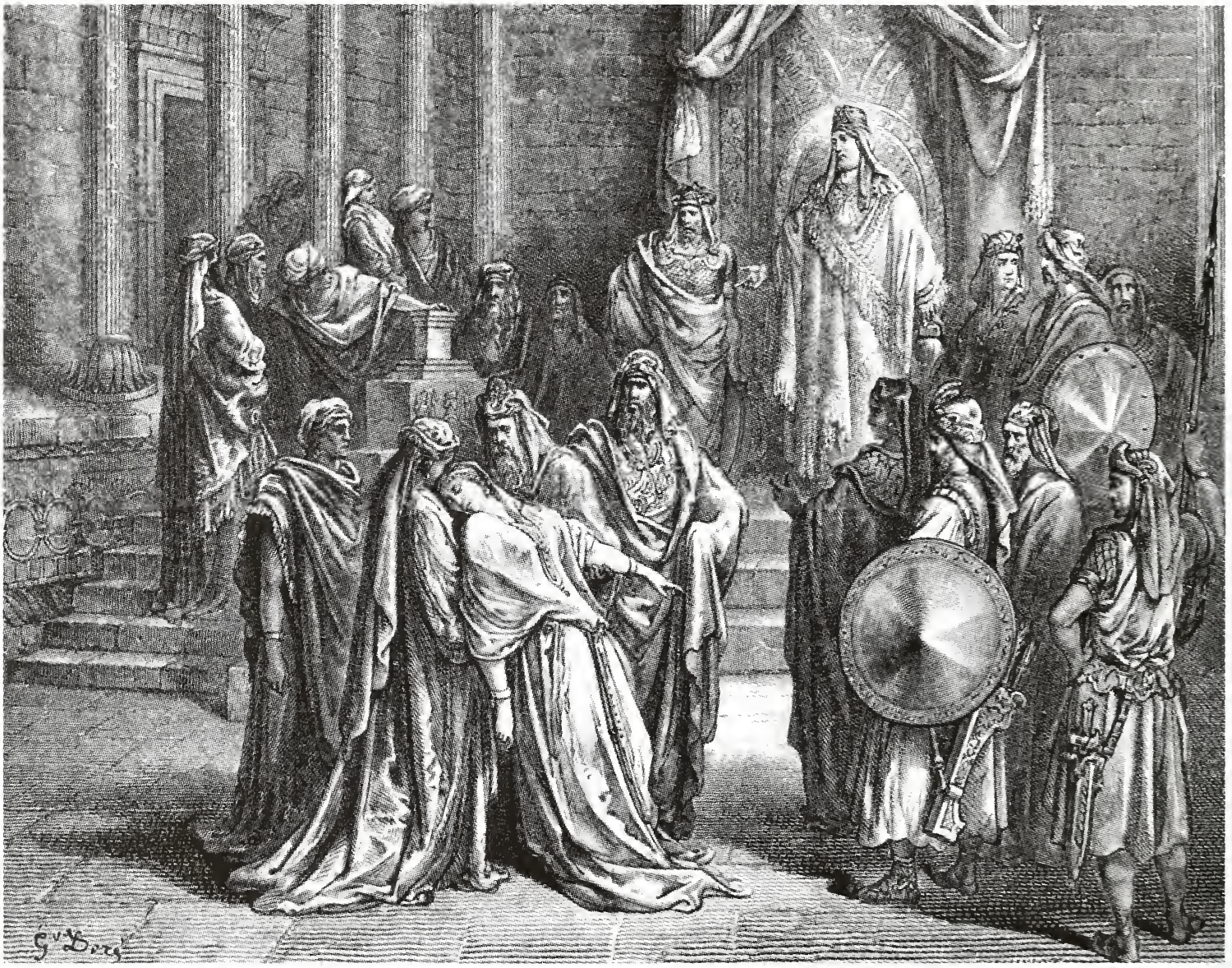
"I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd puts the sheep before himself, sacrifices himself if necessary. A hired man is not a real shepherd. The sheep mean nothing to him. He sees a wolf come and runs for it, leaving the sheep to be ravaged and scattered by the wolf. He's only in it for the money. The sheep don't matter to him. "I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own sheep know me. In the same way, the Father knows me and I know the Father. I put the sheep before myself, sacrificing myself if necessary. You need to know that I have other sheep in addition to those in this pen. I need to gather and bring them, too. They'll also recognize my voice. Then it will be one flock, one Shepherd.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

We need to find God, and He cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence.

Mother Teresa



Personal Providence and Divine Destiny: *"Tell all the Jews in Susa to gather in small groups to fast and pray for me. Tell them not to eat or drink anything except water for three days and nights. I and my servant girls will do the same. The third day from now I'll go in to see the king, even though it's against the law. And if I perish, I perish." Esther 4:16*

DESTINY

It May Take Time to Discover Your Life Purpose

Esther 4 (CW)

Esther and Jewish Liberation

When Esther's maids and the royal eunuchs told her that Mordecai was outside dressed in sackcloth and weeping, she was very concerned. She sent some new clothes to Mordecai with the message for him to put them on so he could enter the gate. But he refused.

Then Esther called Hathach, one of the royal eunuchs assigned to her and asked him to go talk to Mordecai to find out what was troubling him and why. So Hathach went out to see Mordecai, who was sitting in the open square in front of the palace, to find out what his problem was.

Mordecai told him everything that had happened and that because of him, Haman had persuaded the king to replenish the royal treasury by killing all Jews in the empire and confiscating and selling their

property. Then he gave Hathach a copy of the king's order against the Jews, which had already been read and posted throughout the city of Susa. Mordecai asked him to be sure to give a copy of it to Esther and to explain to her the seriousness of the situation. He also asked Hathach to urge her to go in to the king to plead with him to have mercy on her people. Hathach went back to Esther and gave her a copy of the king's order and told her everything that Mordecai had said.

She read the document and told Hathach to tell Mordecai, "All the king's officials and people throughout the empire know that if any man or woman steps inside the inner court without being summoned and stands at the royal entrance to see the king, he will be put to death. That's the law. The only exception is if the king decides to hold out his golden scepter to that person, then his life would be spared. To make matters worse, for some reason the king has not wanted to see me lately; he hasn't called for me for over a month."

When Hathach told Mordecai what Esther had said, Mordecai asked him to tell her, "Don't think that just because you're in the palace that you'll be the only Jew to escape the king's order. Haman knows that we're related. One way or another you'll be killed also. If you go in to see the king, there's a chance you might be able to save our people, but if you don't and God delivers us some other way, you'll forever disgrace yourself in the eyes of our people, and your family will surely disappear from the tribe of Benjamin. But who knows? Perhaps you were chosen queen for such a time as this."

When Hathach told Esther what Mordecai had said, she determined to approach the king to try to save her people. So she sent Hathach back to Mordecai with this message: "Tell all the Jews in Susa to gather in small groups to fast and pray for me. Tell them not to eat or drink anything except water for three days and nights. I and my servant girls will do the same. The third day from now I'll go in to see the king, even though it's against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Spiritual Growth Calls for Sacrifice: *"Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love."*
2 Peter 1:5

DEVELOPMENT

Develop Life Skills to Secure Success

2 Peter 1 (NKJV)

Spiritual Growth and Development

Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and

abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease. For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy

never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Jesus Taught Dietary Principles: *"'These are the regulations concerning animals, birds, every living thing that moves in the water and every creature that moves about on the ground. You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten.'" Leviticus 11:46*

DIETARY PRINCIPLES

You Are What You Eat

Leviticus 11 (NIV)

Biblical Dietary Health Code

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Say to the Israelites: 'Of all the animals that live on land, these are the ones you may eat: You may eat any animal that has a split hoof completely divided and that chews the cud.

"'There are some that only chew the cud or only have a split hoof, but you must not eat them. The camel, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is ceremonially unclean for you. The coney, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is unclean for you. The rabbit, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is unclean for you. And the pig, though it has a split hoof completely divided, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you. You must not eat their meat or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you.

"'Of all the creatures living in the water of the seas and the streams, you may eat any that have fins and scales. But all creatures in the seas or streams that do not have fins and scales—whether among all the swarming things or among all the other living creatures in the water—

you are to detest. And since you are to detest them, you must not eat their meat and you must detest their carcasses. Anything living in the water that does not have fins and scales is to be detestable to you.

" 'These are the birds you are to detest and not eat because they are detestable: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, the red kite, any kind of black kite, any kind of raven, the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat.

" 'All flying insects that walk on all fours are to be detestable to you. There are, however, some winged creatures that walk on all fours that you may eat: those that have jointed legs for hopping on the ground. Of these you may eat any kind of locust, katydid, cricket or grasshopper. But all other winged creatures that have four legs you are to detest.

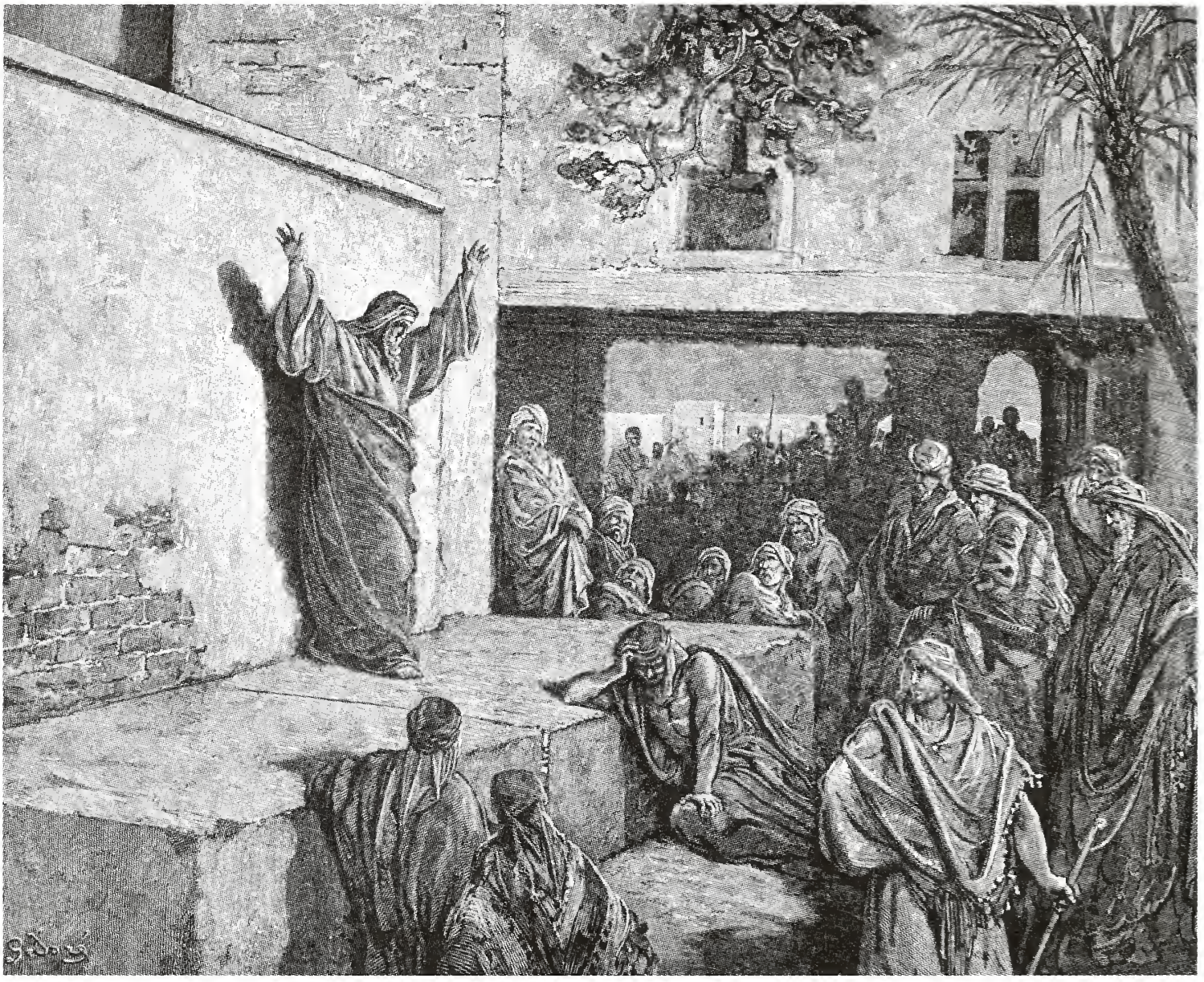
" 'You will make yourselves unclean by these; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. Whoever picks up one of their carcasses must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening.

" 'Every animal that has a split hoof not completely divided or that does not chew the cud is unclean for you; whoever touches the carcass of any of them will be unclean. Of all the animals that walk on all fours, those that walk on their paws are unclean for you; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. Anyone who picks up their carcasses must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening. They are unclean for you.

" 'These are the regulations concerning animals, birds, every living thing that moves in the water and every creature that moves about on the ground. You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten.' "

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



God's Discipline Shows Love: *"Don't shrug off God's discipline, but don't be crushed by it either. It's the child he loves that he disciplines; the child he embraces, he also corrects. God is educating you; that's why you must never drop out. He's treating you as dear children." Hebrews 12:5*

DISCIPLINE

Control Your Mind, Body, and Behavior

Hebrews 12 (The Msg)

Christ, the Christian, and Chastisement

So don't feel sorry for yourselves. Or have you forgotten how good parents treat children, and that God regards you as his children?

My dear child, don't shrug off God's discipline, but don't be crushed by it either.

It's the child he loves that he disciplines; the child he embraces, he also corrects.

God is educating you; that's why you must never drop out. He's treating you as dear children. This trouble you're in isn't punishment; it's training, the normal experience of children. Only irresponsible parents leave children to fend for themselves. Would you prefer an irresponsible God? We respect our own parents for training and not spoiling us, so why not embrace God's training so we can truly live? While we were children, our parents did what seemed best to them. But God

is doing what is best for us, training us to live God's holy best. At the time, discipline isn't much fun. It always feels like it's going against the grain. Later, of course, it pays off handsomely, for it's the well-trained who find themselves mature in their relationship with God.

Work at getting along with each other and with God. Otherwise you'll never get so much as a glimpse of God. Make sure no one gets left out of God's generosity. Keep a sharp eye out for weeds of bitter discontent. A thistle or two gone to seed can ruin a whole garden in no time. Watch out for the Esau syndrome: trading away God's lifelong gift in order to satisfy a short-term appetite. You well know how Esau later regretted that impulsive act and wanted God's blessing—but by then it was too late, tears or no tears.

Unlike your ancestors, you didn't come to Mount Sinai—all that volcanic blaze and earthshaking rumble—to hear God speak. The ear-splitting words and soul-shaking message terrified them and they begged him to stop. When they heard the words—"If an animal touches the Mountain, it's as good as dead"—they were afraid to move. Even Moses was terrified.

No, that's not your experience at all. You've come to Mount Zion, the city where the living God resides. The invisible Jerusalem is populated by throngs of festive angels and Christian citizens. It is the city where God is Judge, with judgments that make us just. You've come to Jesus, who presents us with a new covenant, a fresh charter from God. He is the Mediator of this covenant. The murder of Jesus, unlike

Abel's—a homicide that cried out for vengeance—became a proclamation of grace.

So don't turn a deaf ear to these gracious words. If those who ignored earthly warnings didn't get away with it, what will happen to us if we turn our backs on heavenly warnings? His voice that time shook the earth to its foundations; this time—he's told us this quite plainly—he'll also rock the heavens: "One last shaking, from top to bottom, stem to stern." The phrase "one last shaking" means a thorough housecleaning, getting rid of all the historical and religious junk so that the unshakable essentials stand clear and uncluttered. Do you see what we've got? An unshakable kingdom! And do you see how thankful we must be? Not only thankful, but brimming with worship, deeply reverent before God. For God is not an indifferent bystander. He's actively cleaning house, torching all that needs to burn, and he won't quit until it's all cleansed. God himself is Fire!

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Dissidents Will Always Be with Us: *"Scoffers would come in the last days who would follow their own ungodly desires and that such mockers would continue to be part of the church until the end. The problem is that these kinds of people bring divisions into the church because they're guided by their own desires and not by the Holy Spirit." Jude 1:18*

DISSIDENTS

Look Out for Apostasy

Jude 1 (CW)

Dealing with Apostasy and Fringe Movements

Dear believers, although I decided to write to you to clarify some things about the salvation we share, I also need to urge you to continue defending the faith against those who are challenging it.

Certain men of dubious reputation who have caused trouble in the past have slipped in among you. You need to be aware of them because they change the grace of God into permissiveness, thus nullifying God's plan to save us from sin through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

I want to remind you again, even though you already know it, that though God saved the Israelites and brought them out of Egypt, He destroyed those who were rebellious. Going back farther in time, even some of the angels rebelled against God, so He had to expel them from heaven and confine them to this world until the Day of Judgment when they will be destroyed. Look at what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities. They were so filled with

immorality, sodomy, and other sexual perversions that their destruction is an example of what will happen to those who insist on living that way. That's the kind of ungodly men who have attached themselves to your congregation, living perverted and filthy lives. They despise restraint and accuse those in authority of wrongdoing.

In contrast to these ungodly men is the Lord Jesus, also called Michael the Archangel, for He is in charge of the entire angelic host. When He was challenged by Satan about His intentions to resurrect Moses, He didn't come at Satan with a blistering attack, nor did he belittle him. He simply said, "God rejects your claim to his body."

Ungodly men speak abusively against anything they don't understand and criticize what they know nothing about. They go by instinct and, like irrational animals, they end up destroying themselves. Condemnation is theirs. They have followed the path of Cain and run after money as greedily as Balaam. The same rebellion is in their hearts as was in the heart of Korah, and they'll be destroyed just as he was.

These men come to your fellowship dinners and eat with you as if nothing were the matter. They're like clouds that promise showers, but they're empty, carried along by the wind. They're like fruitless trees at harvest time, dried up at the roots, twice dead. They're like foaming waves on a beach or wandering stars which disappear into the darkness.

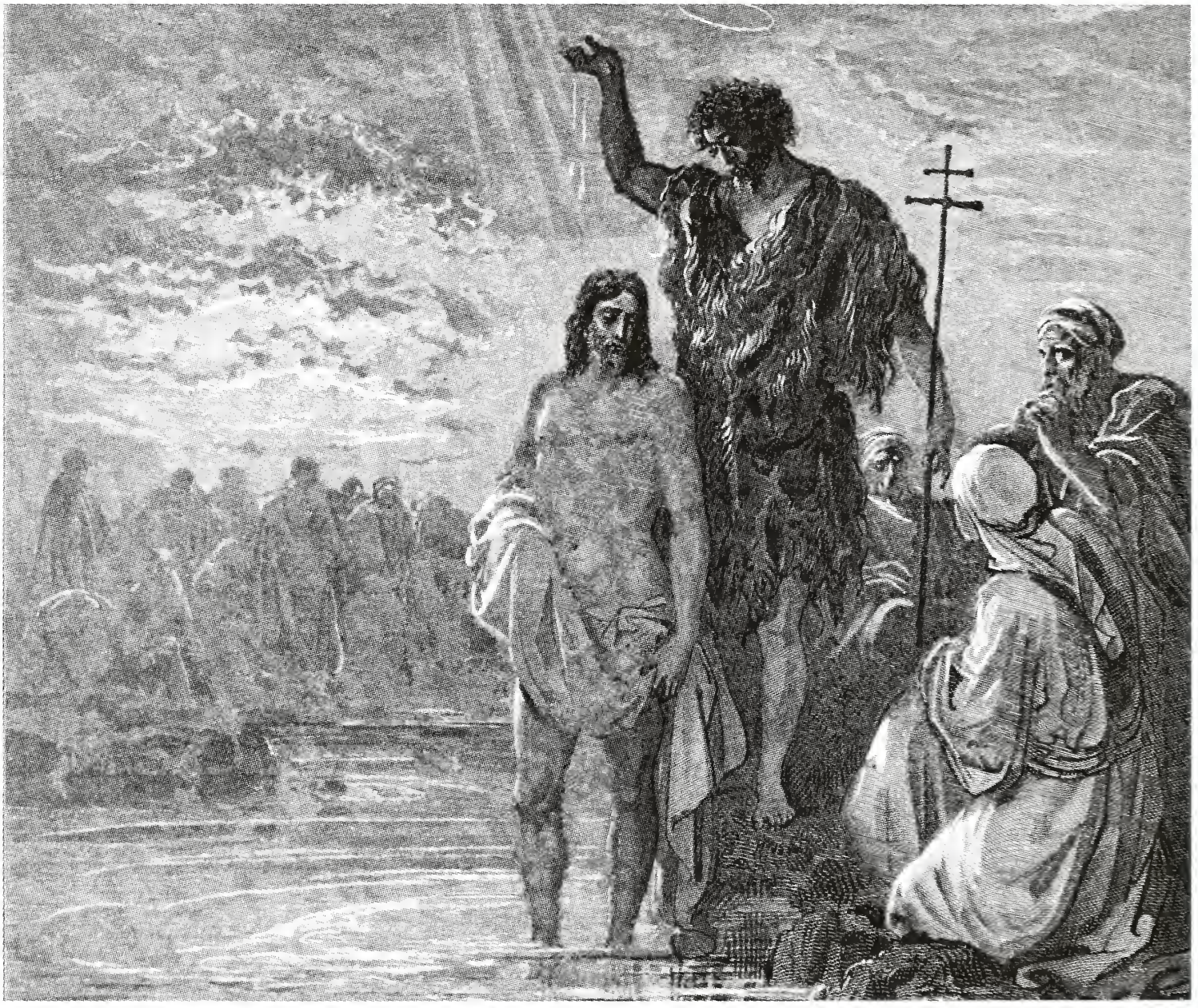
Enoch, the seventh in line from Adam, prophesied what would happen to such people when he said, "I was shown in vision the Lord

coming to earth with ten thousand angels, to judge everyone and to convict the ungodly of all their ungodliness, their immorality, their arrogance, and the hard things they have spoken against Him."

These people are constantly complaining, grumbling, following their own evil inclinations and flattering others for their own advantage. Dear friends, remember what the Lord Jesus Christ told the apostles, that scoffers would come in the last days who would follow their own ungodly desires and that such mockers would continue to be part of the church until the end. The problem is that these kinds of people bring divisions into the church because they're guided by their own desires and not by the Holy Spirit.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



The Always-Was Word: *"So the Word of God became a man and lived among us. We saw that Light with our own eyes and knew it was from God. Jesus was gracious, kind and full of light and truth." John 1:14*

DIVINITY

Get to Know the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

John 1 (CW)

Christ the Eternal Everlasting Word

In the beginning, going farther back in time than can be imagined, the Word of God was there. The Word stood by the side of God, and the Word was fully God. There never was a time when the Word of God was not with God. All things were made by Him, and nothing that was made was made without Him.

He is the Source of life, and His life here on earth was the Light that brought spiritual hope to all mankind. This Light was seen among us and shone into our moral darkness; yet the dark minds of men did not understand this Light. They were unable to stop the Light from shining.

A man appeared, sent by God, whose name was John. He came to tell people about this Light so they would have a chance to believe. He was not the Light, but was sent to point to it. The true Light that was to shine on all mankind was soon to come.

Finally, Jesus came. He came to our world, this very world He created, but the people did not know who He was. He came to His own chosen people, yet they didn't even recognize Him. But to those who did receive Him and believed in Him, He extended the privilege of becoming the children of God, born again, not naturally from ancestors, nor because of a man's will, but totally through the power of God.

So the Word of God became a man and lived among us. We saw that Light with our own eyes and knew it was from God. Jesus was gracious, kind and full of light and truth.

John witnessed about Him, saying, "This is the One I've been telling you about when I said, `He who comes after me is greater than I am because He existed from all eternity.' Listen to Him."

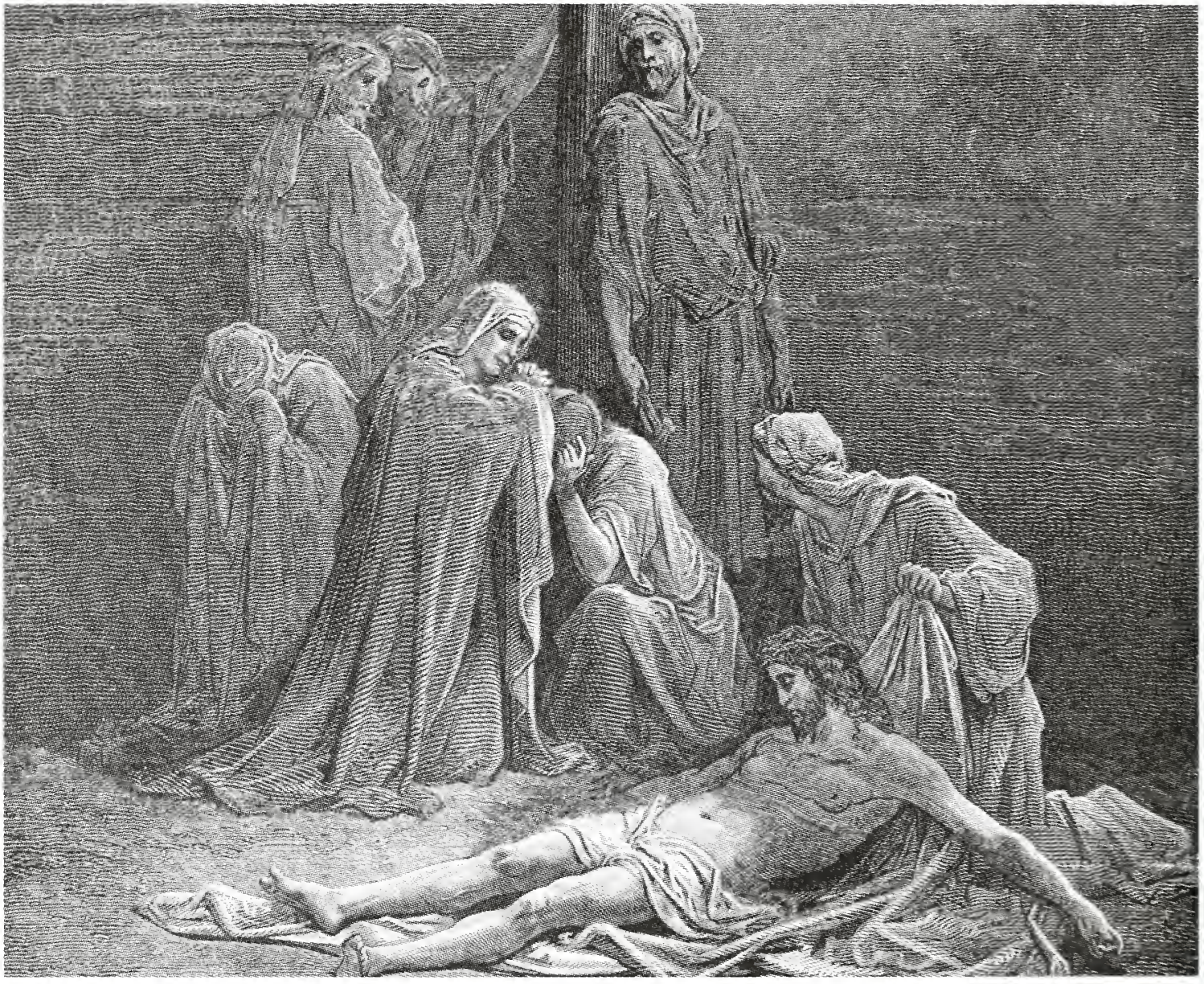
Because of Jesus' abundant grace, we've all been blessed time after time. As important as Moses was, he could only give us the law, but grace and truth have come to us through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God face to face except the Son of God, who came to us directly from the Father, and He came to show us what the Father is like. This is in harmony with the witness John bore when the priests and Levites from Jerusalem came to the Jordan River where he was preaching and asked him, "Who are you?" The ones asking John these questions had been sent by the Pharisees.

They continued questioning, "Why are you baptizing people if you're not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor that great prophet whom Moses spoke about? Who gave you authority to do this?"

John said, "I'm only baptizing people with water, which has no power in itself to transform lives, but there is One among you whom you don't even know. He has power to change people's lives. His public ministry will begin after mine ends, but He is much more important than I am. In fact, I'm not even worthy to loosen His sandals." The next day when John saw Jesus pressing through the crowd, coming to be baptized, he pointed to Him and called out for everyone to hear, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who will take away the sins of the world!" Then Jesus, like the others, was baptized, and from there He went into the wilderness to fast and pray.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



We Can Comfort Others Because We Have Experienced Problems: *"He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us." 2 Corinthians 1:4*

EMPATHY

Your Experience, a Source of Comfort

2 Corinthians 1 (The Msg)

The Source of All Comfort

All praise to the God and Father of our Master, Jesus the Messiah! Father of all mercy! God of all healing counsel! He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us. We have plenty of hard times that come from following the Messiah, but no more so than the good times of his healing comfort—we get a full measure of that, too.

When we suffer for Jesus, it works out for your healing and salvation. If we are treated well, given a helping hand and encouraging word, that also works to your benefit, spurring you on, face forward, unflinching. Your hard times are also our hard times. When we see that you're just as willing to endure the hard times as to enjoy the good times, we know you're going to make it, no doubt about it.

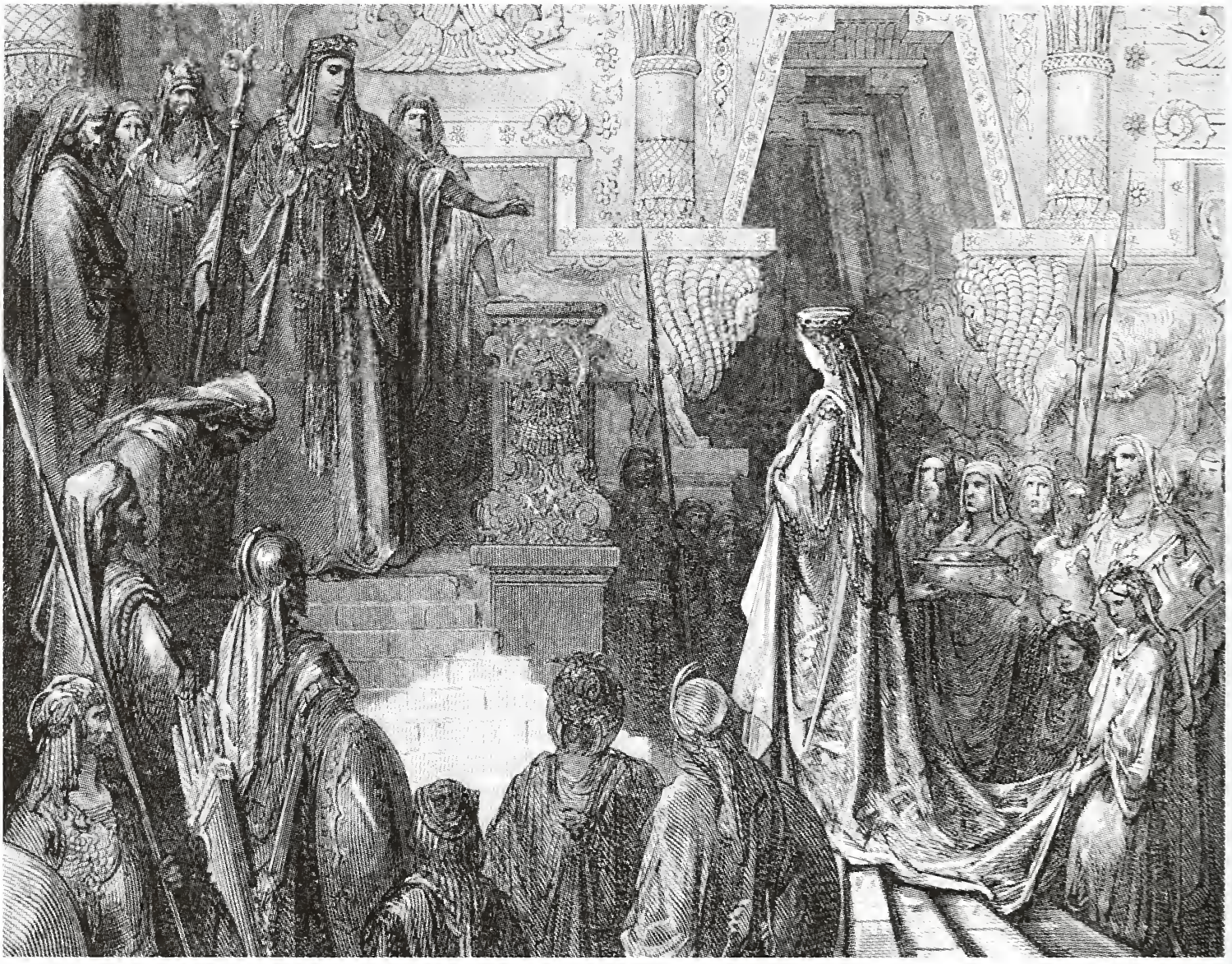
We don't want you in the dark, friends, about how hard it was when all this came down on us in Asia province. It was so bad we didn't think we were going to make it. We felt like we'd been sent to death row, that it was all over for us. As it turned out, it was the best thing that could have happened. Instead of trusting in our own strength or wits to get out of it, we were forced to trust God totally—not a bad idea since he's the God who raises the dead! And he did it, rescued us from certain doom. And he'll do it again, rescuing us as many times as we need rescuing. You and your prayers are part of the rescue operation—I don't want you in the dark about that either. I can see your faces even now, lifted in praise for God's deliverance of us, a rescue in which your prayers played such a crucial part.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Actions speak louder than words, and they tell fewer lies.

Unknown



Solomon Stunned the World with His Wisdom: *"What do I think of the fun-filled life? Insane! Inane! My verdict on the pursuit of happiness? Who needs it? With the help of a bottle of wine and all the wisdom I could muster, I tried my level best to penetrate the absurdity of life. I wanted to get a handle on anything useful we mortals might do during the years we spend on this earth." Ecclesiastes 2:1*

EMPTINESS

Life Is Something Else!

Ecclesiastes 2 (The Msg)

Solomon on Life

I said to myself, "Let's go for it—experiment with pleasure, have a good time!" But there was nothing to it, nothing but smoke.

What do I think of the fun-filled life? Insane! Inane! My verdict on the pursuit of happiness? Who needs it? With the help of a bottle of wine and all the wisdom I could muster, I tried my level best to penetrate the absurdity of life. I wanted to get a handle on anything useful we mortals might do during the years we spend on this earth. Oh, I did great things: built houses, planted vineyards, designed gardens and parks and planted a variety of fruit trees in them, made pools of water to irrigate the groves of trees. I bought slaves, male and female, who had children, giving me even more slaves; then I acquired large herds and flocks, larger than any before me in Jerusalem. I piled up silver and gold, loot from kings and kingdoms. I gathered a chorus of singers to entertain me with song, and—most exquisite of all pleasures—voluptuous maidens for my bed.

Oh, how I prospered! What's more, I kept a clear head through it all. Everything I wanted I took—I never said no to myself. I gave in to every impulse, held back nothing. I sucked the marrow of pleasure out of every task—my reward to myself for a hard day's work! Then I took a good look at everything I'd done, looked at all the sweat and hard work. But when I looked, I saw nothing but smoke. Smoke and spitting into the wind. There was nothing to any of it. Nothing.

And then I took a hard look at what's smart and what's stupid. What's left to do after you've been king? That's a hard act to follow. You just do what you can, and that's it. But I did see that it's better to be smart than stupid, just as light is better than darkness. When I realized that my fate's the same as the fool's, I had to ask myself, "So why bother being wise?" The smart and the stupid both disappear out of sight. In a day or two they're both forgotten. Yes, both the smart and the stupid die, and that's it. I hate life. As far as I can see, what happens on earth is a bad business. And I hated everything I'd accomplished and accumulated on this earth. I can't take it with me—no, I have to leave it to whoever comes after me. Whether they're worthy or worthless, they'll take over the earthly results of my intense thinking and hard work.

That's when I called it quits, gave up on anything that could be hoped for on this earth. What's the point of working your fingers to the bone if you hand over what you worked for to someone who never lifted a finger for it? So what do you get from a life of hard labor? Pain

and grief from dawn to dusk. Never a decent night's rest. Nothing but smoke.

The best you can do with your life is have a good time and get by the best you can. The way I see it, that's it—divine fate. Whether we feast or fast, it's up to God. God may give wisdom and knowledge and joy to his favorites, but sinners are assigned a life of hard labor, and end up turning their wages over to God's favorites. Nothing but smoke—and spitting into the wind.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Early Roots of an Ongoing Universal Controversy: *When the Woman saw that the tree looked like good eating and realized what she would get out of it—she'd know everything!—she took and ate the fruit and then gave some to her husband, and he ate. Immediately the two of them did "see what's really going on"—saw themselves naked! They sewed fig leaves together as makeshift clothes for themselves. Genesis 3:6*

EVIL ANTAGONISM

Evil Has Always Been, Exists Now, But Will Be Annihilated

Genesis 3 (The Msg)

Christ Announced Enmity with Satan

The serpent was clever, more clever than any wild animal God had made. He spoke to the Woman: "Do I understand that God told you not to eat from any tree in the garden?"

The Woman said to the serpent, "Not at all. We can eat from the trees in the garden. It's only about the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'Don't eat from it; don't even touch it or you'll die.' "

The serpent told the Woman, "You won't die. God knows that the moment you eat from that tree, you'll see what's really going on. You'll be just like God, knowing everything, ranging all the way from good to evil."

When the Woman saw that the tree looked like good eating and realized what she would get out of it—she'd know everything!—she

took and ate the fruit and then gave some to her husband, and he ate. Immediately the two of them did "see what's really going on"—saw themselves naked! They sewed fig leaves together as makeshift clothes for themselves.

When they heard the sound of God strolling in the garden in the evening breeze, the Man and his Wife hid in the trees of the garden, hid from God.

God called to the Man: "Where are you?" He said, "I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked. And I hid." God said, "Who told you you were naked? Did you eat from that tree I told you not to eat from?" The Man said, "The Woman you gave me as a companion, she gave me fruit from the tree, and, yes, I ate it." God said to the Woman, "What is this that you've done?" "The serpent seduced me," she said, "and I ate."

God told the serpent: "Because you've done this, you're cursed, cursed beyond all cattle and wild animals, cursed to slink on your belly and eat dirt all your life. I'm declaring war between you and the Woman, between your offspring and hers. He'll wound your head, you'll wound his heel." He told the Woman: "I'll multiply your pains in childbirth; you'll give birth to your babies in pain. You'll want to please your husband, but he'll lord it over you."

He told the Man: "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from, 'Don't eat from this tree, 'The very ground is cursed because of you; getting food from the

ground will be as painful as having babies is for your wife; you'll be working in pain all your life long. The ground will sprout thorns and weeds, you'll get your food the hard way, planting and tilling and harvesting, sweating in the fields from dawn to dusk, until you return to that ground yourself, dead and buried; you started out as dirt, you'll end up dirt."

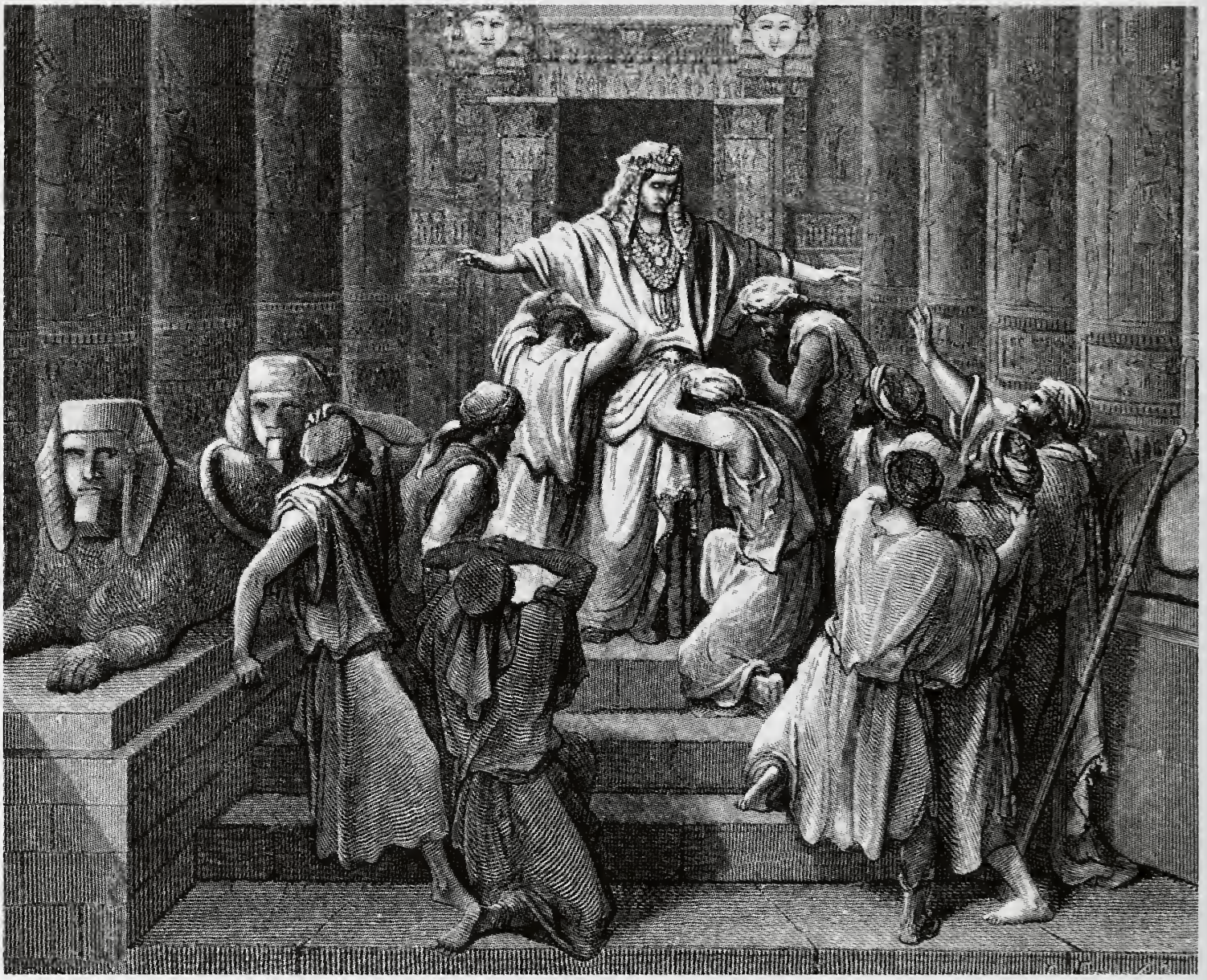
The Man, known as Adam, named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all the living.

God made leather clothing for Adam and his wife and dressed them.

God said, "The Man has become like one of us, capable of knowing everything, ranging from good to evil. What if he now should reach out and take fruit from the Tree-of-Life and eat, and live forever? Never—this cannot happen!" So God expelled them from the Garden of Eden and sent them to work the ground, the same dirt out of which they'd been made.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



Like Joseph, Set Standards High in Your Life: *"I urge you to teach and preach these things. Don't let anyone tell you that you're too young to teach them anything. Just keep on being a pattern for the believers through your preaching, your conversations, your attitude, your care, your own pure life and most of all by your love of Christ." 1 Timothy 4:12*

EXAMPLE

Represent the Best Values, Virtues, and Vision

1 Timothy 4 (CW)

Counsel on How to Be An Example

The Holy Spirit has explicitly told us that in the last days, people will give up their faith and turn away from Christ. They will listen to deceiving spirits and end up following doctrines of demons. Some will pretend to be loyal to the truth while teaching lies, and their consciences will be as insensitive to guilt as if they had been seared with a hot iron.

These people will forbid believers to ever marry or will command them to eat only certain foods if they want to be saved. They even forbid believers to eat that which God has created to be eaten with gratitude and thanksgiving, especially by those who are free from ceremonial rituals and who know the truth.

God has created all kinds of food. Nothing should be rejected which He has said we can eat, and we should do so with thanksgiving

and praise. These foods not only have the approval of the word of God, but will also be blessed by Him through our prayers.

When you share with people the things I just told you, remind them of my other instructions. If you do this, you will be a good minister, nourished by your faith in Christ and the doctrines which you have made your own.

Stay away from Jewish legends and pagan myths. Instead, focus all your energies on modeling your life after Christ.

Take time for physical exercise because this has value in keeping you fit and alert.

Most of all, exercise your spiritual faculties because this not only gives you a happier life here, but also promises to give you eternal life in God's kingdom.

You've heard me say all this before, but it's still true. We gladly work and suffer because we have set our faith and hope on the living God who wants everyone to be saved, especially those who already know Christ.

I urge you to teach and preach these things. Don't let anyone tell you that you're too young to teach them anything. Just keep on being a pattern for the believers through your preaching, your conversations, your attitude, your care, your own pure life and most of all by your love of Christ.

Soon I expect to be released, so until I can come, continue your public reading of the Scriptures and your scheduled times for preach-

ing and teaching. Keep encouraging and instructing the believers as you've been doing.

Don't neglect the spiritual gift and the responsibilities that were given to you through a prophetic message from God when the elders laid their hands on you at your ordination. Think about your duties as a minister and put your gift to use so that your spiritual progress and commitment can be seen by everyone. Watch yourself to make sure you continue to center our doctrines in Christ. As you do this, you'll not only save your own soul, but those who listen to you.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Christ Asks Us to Love Him By Loving Others: *"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8*

EXPECTATIONS

God's Challenge and Summation

Micah 6 (NIV)

What God Requires of His People

Listen to what the LORD says: "Stand up, plead your case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say. Hear, O mountains, the LORD's accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel.

"My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me. I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam. My people, remember what Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember [your journey] from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."

With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand

rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

"The person who works for development and progress begins to make history, as opposed to simply being acted on by history."

Samson Kisekka

Abraham Demonstrated the Power of Faith as the Key to God's Blessings: *"It's impossible to please God apart from faith. And why? Because anyone who wants to approach God must believe both that he exists and that he cares enough to respond to those who seek him." Hebrews 11:6*

FAITH IS THE KEY

Faith is the Essence of Spiritual Life

Hebrews 11 (The Msg)

Faith Sets Believers Apart

The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see. The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd.

By faith, we see the world called into existence by God's word, what we see created by what we don't see. By an act of faith, Abel brought a better sacrifice to God than Cain. It was what he believed, not what he brought, that made the difference. That's what God noticed and approved as righteous. By an act of faith, Enoch skipped death completely. "They looked all over and couldn't find him because God had taken him." We know on the basis of reliable testimony that before he was taken "he pleased God."

It's impossible to please God apart from faith. And why? Because anyone who wants to approach God must believe both that he exists and that he cares enough to respond to those who seek him.

By an act of faith, Abraham said yes to God's call to travel to an unknown place that would become his home. When he left he had no idea where he was going. By an act of faith he lived in the country promised him, lived as a stranger camping in tents. Isaac and Jacob did the same, living under the same promise. Abraham did it by keeping his eye on an unseen city with real, eternal foundations—the City designed and built by God.

By faith, barren Sarah was able to become pregnant, old woman as she was at the time, because she believed the One who made a promise would do what he said. That's how it happened that from one man's dead and shriveled loins there are now people numbering into the millions.

Each one of these people of faith died not yet having in hand what was promised, but still believing. How did they do it? They saw it way off in the distance, waved their greeting, and accepted the fact that they were transients in this world. People who live this way make it plain that they are looking for their true home. If they were homesick for the old country, they could have gone back any time they wanted. But they were after a far better country than that—heaven country. You can see why God is so proud of them, and has a City waiting for them.

I could go on and on, but I've run out of time. There are so many more—Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets. Through acts of faith, they toppled kingdoms, made justice work, took the promises for themselves. Women received their loved

ones back from the dead. There were those who, under torture, refused to give in and go free, preferring something better: resurrection. Others braved abuse and whips, and, yes, chains and dungeons. We have stories of those who were stoned, sawed in two, murdered in cold blood; stories of vagrants wandering the earth in animal skins, homeless, friendless, powerless—the world didn't deserve them!—making their way as best they could on the cruel edges of the world.

Not one of these people, even though their lives of faith were exemplary, got their hands on what was promised. God had a better plan for us: that their faith and our faith would come together to make one completed whole, their lives of faith not complete apart from ours.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

He was Seen Ascending and He Promised to Descend in the Same Manner: *"'Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.'" Acts 1:11*

FAREWELL

Christ Ascended and Sent Us the Holy Spirit

Acts 1 (NIV)

Ascension of Christ

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the

Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus—he was one of our number and shared in this ministry."

Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection." So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Jesus Taught Us to Master Money: *"The love of money leads to all kinds of evil and is often an expression of selfishness. Some are so anxious to get rich that they're willing to give up their faith and bring on themselves deep pain and regret." 1 Timothy 6:10*

FINANCE

Money Should be a Means to an End– Not the End Itself

1 Timothy 6 (CW)

A Spiritual Perspective on Money and Material Things

If someone in your church does not accept the clear words of our Lord Jesus Christ and teaches things contrary to the principles of discipleship as laid down in the gospel, he's either ignorant, self-centered or deluded. Such people love to argue about the meanings of words and end up creating jealousy, dissension, malicious talk and evil suspicions. This leads to more arguments by people whose minds are empty of truth.

Some think that our religion is to help them get ahead financially. Don't associate with such people any more than you have to, or you'll soon pick up the same attitude they have and become dissatisfied with the ministry. Reflect the Lord Jesus Christ in your life. It will give you spiritual contentment and a peace of mind that money can't buy.

We brought nothing into this world and it's certain that we'll take

nothing out of it. If we have food and clothing, what else do we really need? Let's be content with what we have. Those who desire riches set themselves up for many additional temptations, such as foolish lusts which will only hurt them. If they're not careful, they'll be caught in an undertow of sin and carried out toward eternal ruin. The love of money leads to all kinds of evil and is often an expression of selfishness. Some are so anxious to get rich that they're willing to give up their faith and bring on themselves deep pain and regret.

A man of God should avoid all these things. So, focus on righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith. Hold on to the gift of eternal life that you publicly accepted from God through Christ in the presence of many witnesses.

I charge you in the sight of God, the great Life-giver, and in the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ, who in front of Pontius Pilate was not ashamed to confess His faith in His Father, that you keep your ministry free from reproach. Be true to the gospel so that at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ you will be found faithful. He will come when the Father, who is the blessed and sole Ruler of the universe, the Sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords, decides. God is the only One who never dies, and He lives in light that's unapproachable by humans. No man has ever looked into God's face and lived, nor will sinful man ever be allowed to look on His face. To Him be honor, glory and power forever. Amen.

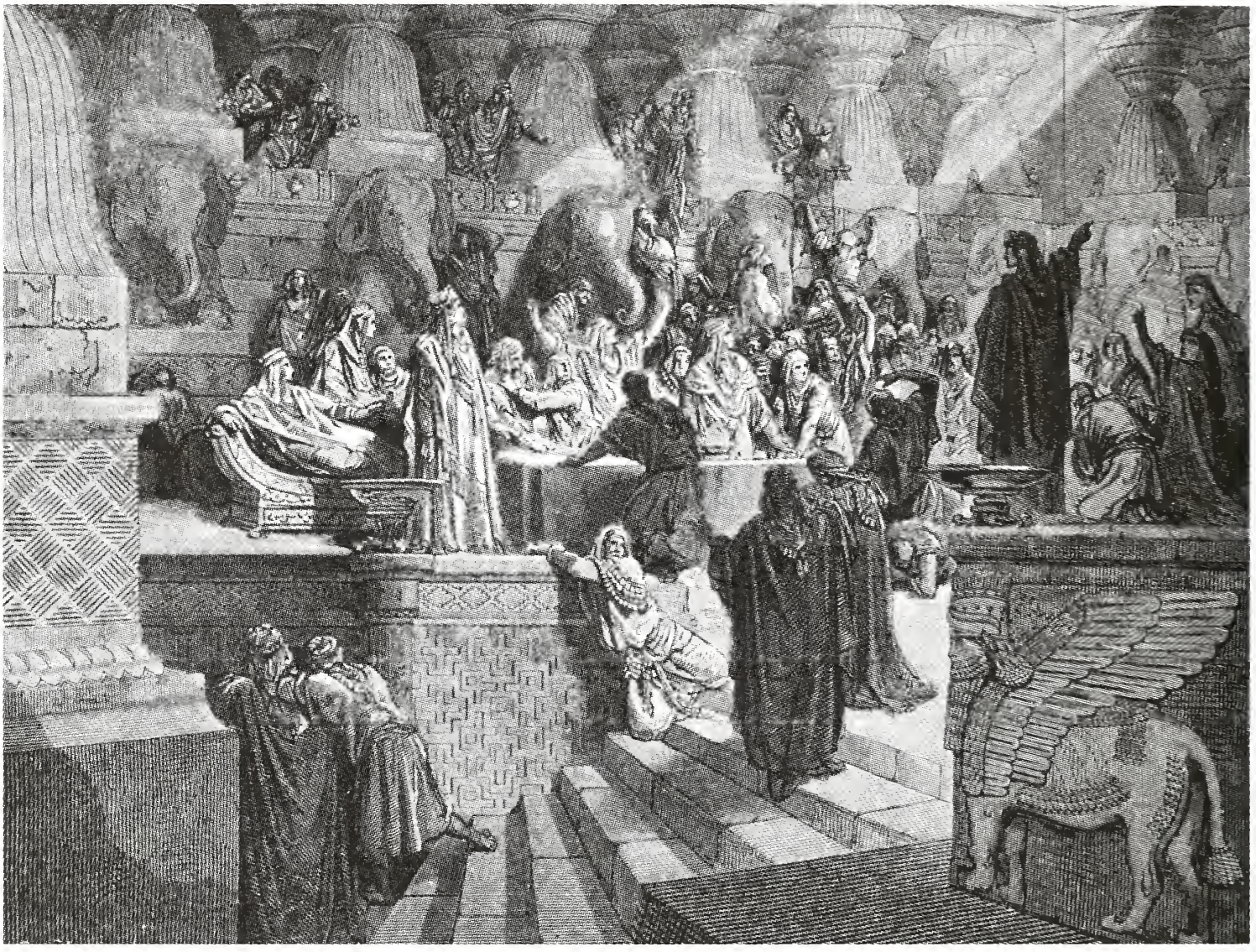
Charge members who are rich not to become proud nor trust in

their wealth. They should put their trust in God; then He will become the source of their enjoyment. They should focus their lives on doing good, becoming rich in virtue, helping those in need and being kind to everyone. This is like putting money which will never be devalued, in the bank of heaven. They'll have a life that's meaningful here, and in the end, they'll be given eternal life.

Timothy, my son, hold on to the teachings which God has entrusted to you. Don't get involved in profane and foolish prattle or in arguments with those who oppose the gospel because of some so-called higher spiritual knowledge. Those who claim to have such so-called knowledge have already missed the mark and wandered from the basics of our faith. God's grace be with you.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



Daniel Demonstrated the Success Secrets Throughout His Profession: *"Daniel made up his mind to be identified with the God of Israel, not Bel, the god of Babylonians even though Ashpenaz had changed his name. Daniel decided not to eat the king's rich food, which had been offered to idols, or to drink his wine. . . . Because Daniel stood firm for God, God worked on his behalf. As a result, Ashpenaz was especially kind to Daniel." Daniel 1:8*

FORTITUDE

Determination is the Secret to Surviving Tough Times

Daniel 1 (CW)

Daniel and His Friends Are Tested

It was in the third year of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, surrounded Jerusalem with his army. The Lord allowed him to capture the king of Judah and plunder the Temple. Then Nebuchadnezzar left for Babylon and told his generals to bring the captives and the Temple treasures back with them.

Once back home, the king ordered Ashpenaz, his master of eunuchs, to select from the Jewish captives young men in their teens who were of royal descent to bring them to his palace for training. They were to be intelligent, handsome, self-disciplined, quick to learn and well-mannered in order to serve in the royal court. Ashpenaz also was to see that they were taught the language and literature of Babylon. They were to be treated as royalty and fed from the same menu of meat and wine as those who ate with the king. Their training was to last for three years and then the king himself would examine them.

Among those chosen from the captives were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, all from the tribe of Judah. After these young men arrived in Babylon and were selected and castrated, Ashpenaz, who was in charge of all the eunuchs at the palace, changed their names. He called Daniel, Belteshazzar, which means Bel Protect the King's Life. Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego. These names identified them as servants of the gods of Babylon.

But Daniel made up his mind to be identified with the God of Israel, not Bel, the god of Babylonians even though Ashpenaz had changed his name. Daniel decided not to eat the king's rich food, which had been offered to idols, or to drink his wine. So he asked Ashpenaz, who was in charge of his training, for permission to follow his Hebrew diet. Because Daniel stood firm for God, God worked on his behalf. As a result, Ashpenaz was especially kind to Daniel.

But when he heard what Daniel wanted to do, he said, "I'm not sure the king would appreciate this because he personally picked out the food and drink you are to have. If he sees that you're not as healthy as the others and that I have taken you off his diet, he'll have me executed." Then Daniel went to Melzar, his personal tutor, whom Ashpenaz had put in charge of the four Hebrews, and said, "Test us for ten days by letting us eat our simple Hebrew diet of vegetables and water. Then compare us with the others and see for yourself if we don't do better than those on the king's diet. After that, whichever diet you decide,

we'll stay with it." Melzar agreed and tested them for ten days. At the end of ten days they looked healthier and were stronger than any of the others who were on the king's diet. So Melzar decided not to require them to eat the king's meat and wine, and allowed them to continue their Hebrew diet.

As these four young men went through their studies, God helped them. He gave them insight and skill in whatever they learned.

When the three years of training were over, Ashpenaz, the master of eunuchs, took all the young men to Nebuchadnezzar for their oral examinations. The king examined each of them and found that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were ahead of all the others. This so impressed the king that he made them permanent members of his court.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Testing the Bonds of Friendship: *"'God be with you as he's been with my father! If I make it through this alive, continue to be my covenant friend. And if I die, keep the covenant friendship with my family—forever. And when God finally rids the earth of David's enemies, stay loyal to Jonathan!'" 1 Samuel 20:13*

FRIENDSHIP

Few Things Can Equal the Comfort of a Good Friend

1 Samuel 20 (The Msg)

The Friendship of Jonathan and David

David got out of Naioth in Ramah and went to Jonathan. "What do I do now? What wrong have I inflicted on your father that makes him so determined to kill me?"

"Nothing," said Jonathan. "You've done nothing wrong. And you're not going to die. Really, you're not! My father tells me everything. He does nothing, whether big or little, without confiding in me. So why would he do this behind my back? It can't be."

But David said, "Your father knows that we are the best of friends. So he says to himself, 'Jonathan must know nothing of this. If he does, he'll side with David.' But it's true—as sure as God lives, and as sure as you're alive before me right now—he's determined to kill me."

Jonathan said, "Tell me what you have in mind. I'll do anything for you."

David said, "Tomorrow marks the New Moon. I'm scheduled to eat with the king. Instead, I'll go hide in the field until the evening of the third. If your father misses me, say, 'David asked if he could run to Bethlehem for an anniversary reunion, and worship with his family.' If he says, 'Good!' then I'm safe. But if he gets angry, you'll know for sure that he's made up his mind to kill me. Oh, stick with me in this. You've entered into a covenant of God with me, remember! If I'm in the wrong, go ahead and kill me yourself. Why bother giving me up to your father?"

"Never!" exclaimed Jonathan. "If I get the slightest hint that my father is fixated on killing you, I'll tell you. Come outside," said Jonathan. "Let's go to the field." When the two of them were out in the field, Jonathan said, "As God, the God of Israel, is my witness, by this time tomorrow I'll get it out of my father how he feels about you. Then I'll let you know what I learn. May God do his worst to me if I let you down! If my father still intends to kill you, I'll tell you and get you out of here in one piece. And God be with you as he's been with my father! If I make it through this alive, continue to be my covenant friend. And if I die, keep the covenant friendship with my family—forever. And when God finally rids the earth of David's enemies, stay loyal to Jonathan!"

Jonathan repeated his pledge of love and friendship for David. He loved David more than his own soul!

In the morning, Jonathan went to the field for the appointment

with David. He had his young servant with him. He told the servant, "Run and get the arrows I'm about to shoot." As the boy came to the area where the arrow had been shot, Jonathan yelled out, "Isn't the arrow farther out?" He yelled again, "Hurry! Quickly! Don't just stand there!" Jonathan's servant then picked up the arrow and brought it to his master.

Jonathan gave his quiver and bow to the boy and sent him back to town. After the servant was gone, David got up from his hiding place beside the boulder, then fell on his face to the ground—three times prostrating himself! And then they kissed one another and wept, friend over friend, David weeping especially hard.

Jonathan said, "Go in peace! The two of us have vowed friendship in God's name, saying, 'God will be the bond between me and you, and between my children and your children forever!'"

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Winning Against the Odds: *"Then Deborah said to Barak, 'Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?' So Barak went down Mount Tabor, followed by ten thousand men. At Barak's advance, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera abandoned his chariot and fled on foot." Judges 4:14*

GENDER BOLDNESS

God is No Respecter of Persons– He Uses Men and Women

Judges 4 (NIV)

The Victory of Deborah and Barak

Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided. She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead the way to Mount Tabor. I will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.' "

Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go." "Very well," Deborah said, "I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will hand Sisera over to a woman." So Deborah

went with Barak to Kedesh, where he summoned Zebulun and Naphtali. Ten thousand men followed him, and Deborah also went with him.

Now Heber the Kenite had left the other Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses' brother-in-law, and pitched his tent by the great tree in Zaanannim near Kedesh. When they told Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, Sisera gathered together his nine hundred iron chariots and all the men with him, from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River.

Then Deborah said to Barak, "Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?" So Barak went down Mount Tabor, followed by ten thousand men. At Barak's advance, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera abandoned his chariot and fled on foot. But Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim. All the troops of Sisera fell by the sword; not a man was left.

Sisera, however, fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there were friendly relations between Jabin king of Hazor and the clan of Heber the Kenite.

Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come, my lord, come right in. Don't be afraid." So he entered her tent, and she put a covering over him.

"I'm thirsty," he said. "Please give me some water." She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up.

"Stand in the doorway of the tent," he told her. "If someone comes by and asks you, 'Is anyone here?' say 'No.' "

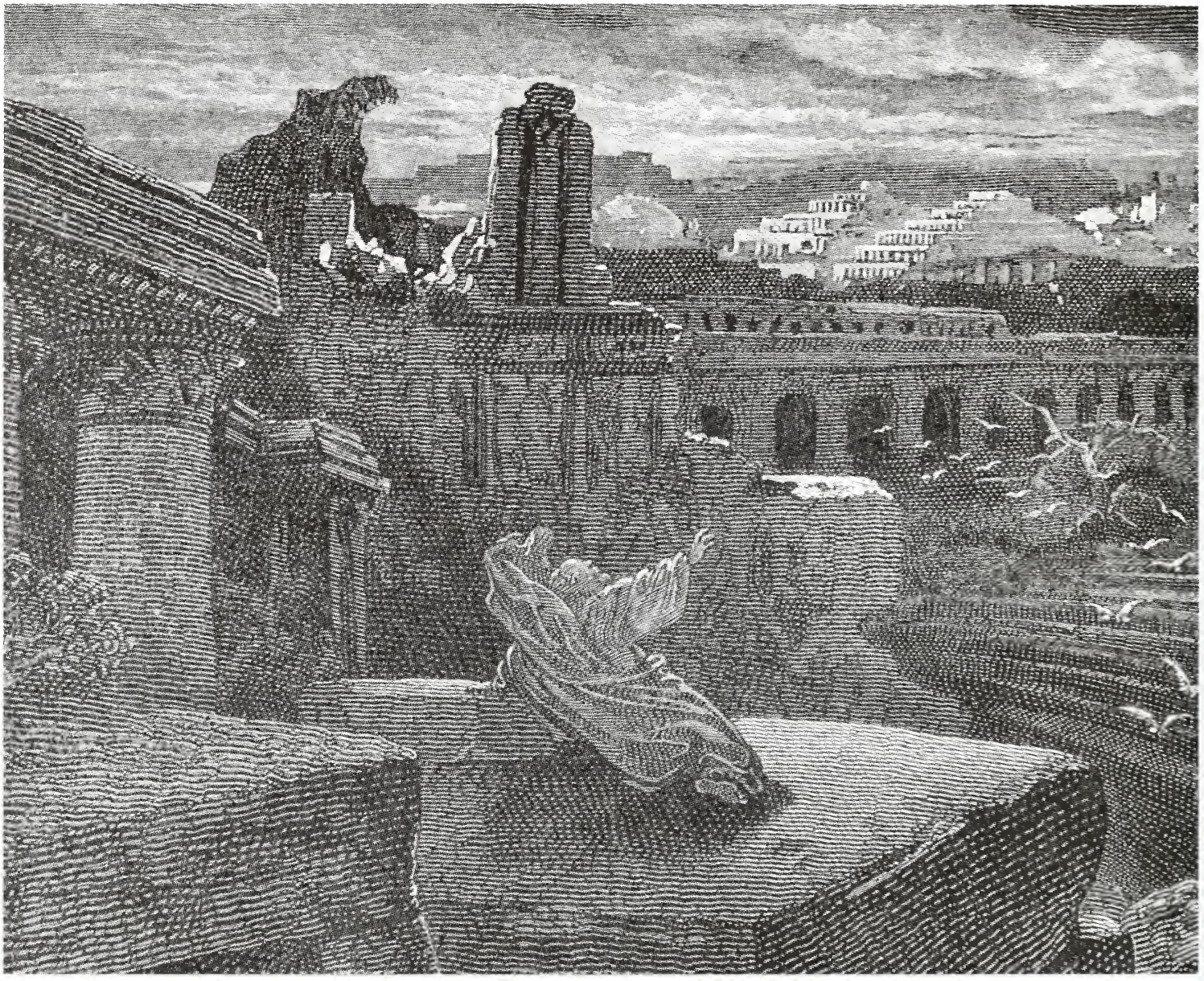
But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died.

Barak came by in pursuit of Sisera, and Jael went out to meet him. "Come," she said, "I will show you the man you're looking for." So he went in with her, and there lay Sisera with the tent peg through his temple—dead.

On that day God subdued Jabin, the Canaanite king, before the Israelites. And the hand of the Israelites grew stronger and stronger against Jabin, the Canaanite king, until they destroyed him.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



Time, History, and the Caprice of Men Cannot Alter the Believer's Faithfulness:
"The last and final word is this: Fear God. Do what he tells you. And that's it. Eventually God will bring everything that we do out into the open and judge it according to its hidden intent, whether it's good or evil." Ecclesiastes 12:13

GERIATRIC

Living to an Old Age with Jesus is a Blessing

Ecclesiastes 12 (The Msg)

Insights on the Aging Process

Honor and enjoy your Creator while you're still young, Before the years take their toll and your vigor wanes, before your vision dims and the world blurs and the winter years keep you close to the fire. In old age, your body no longer serves you so well. Muscles slacken, grip weakens, joints stiffen. The shades are pulled down on the world. You can't come and go at will. Things grind to a halt. The hum of the household fades away. You are wakened now by bird-song.

Hikes to the mountains are a thing of the past. Even a stroll down the road has its terrors. Your hair turns apple-blossom white, adorning a fragile and impotent matchstick body. Yes, you're well on your way to eternal rest, while your friends make plans for your funeral.

Life, lovely while it lasts, is soon over. Life as we know it, precious and beautiful, ends. The body is put back in the same ground it came from. The spirit returns to God, who first breathed it. It's all smoke, nothing but smoke. The Quester says that everything's smoke.

Besides being wise himself, the Quester also taught others knowledge. He weighed, examined, and arranged many proverbs. The Quester did his best to find the right words and write the plain truth.

The words of the wise prod us to live well. They're like nails hammered home, holding life together. They are given by God, the one Shepherd. But regarding anything beyond this, dear friend, go easy. There's no end to the publishing of books, and constant study wears you out so you're no good for anything else.

The last and final word is this: Fear God. Do what he tells you.

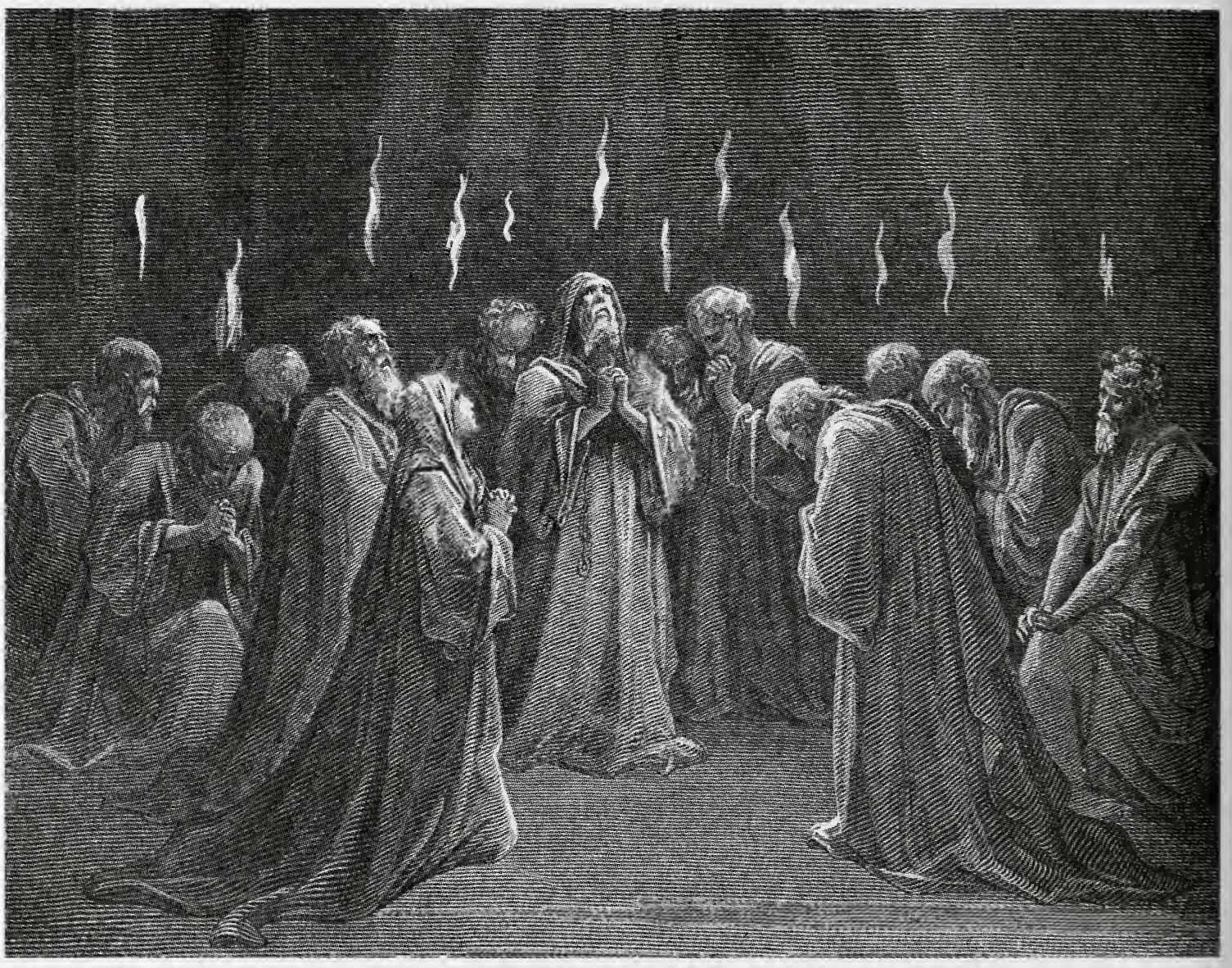
And that's it. Eventually God will bring everything that we do out into the open and judge it according to its hidden intent, whether it's good or evil.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

People are funny—everyone wants to live a long life, but no one wants to get old.

Unknown



Gifts Given by the Holy Spirit: *"God's various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits." 1 Corinthians 12:4*

GIFTS

Gifts, Talents, and Abilities are Tools for Service

1 Corinthians 12 (NIV)

Gifts of the Spirit in the Body of Christ

What I want to talk about now is the various ways God's Spirit gets worked into our lives. This is complex and often misunderstood, but I want you to be informed and knowledgeable.

God's various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits.

All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful: wise counsel; clear understanding; simple trust; healing the sick; miraculous acts; proclamation; distinguishing between spirits; tongues; interpretation of tongues.

All these gifts have a common origin, but are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God. He decides who gets what, and when. You can easily enough see how this kind of thing works by looking no further than your own body. Your body has many parts—limbs, organs, cells—but no matter how many parts you can name, you're still one body. It's exactly the same with Christ. By means of his one Spirit, we all said good-bye to our partial and piecemeal lives. We each used to independently call our own shots, but then we entered into a large and integrated life in which he has the final say in everything. (This is what we proclaimed in word and action when we were baptized.) Each of us is now a part of his resurrection body, refreshed and sustained at one fountain—his Spirit—where we all come to drink. The old labels we once used to identify ourselves—labels like Jew or Greek, slave or free—are no longer useful. We need something larger, more comprehensive.

I want you to think about how all this makes you more significant, not less. A body isn't just a single part blown up into something huge. It's all the different-but-similar parts arranged and functioning together. If Foot said, "I'm not elegant like Hand, embellished with rings; I guess I don't belong to this body," would that make it so? If Ear said, "I'm not beautiful like Eye, limpid and expressive; I don't deserve a place on the head," would you want to remove it from the body? If the body was all eye, how could it hear? If all ear, how could it smell? As it

is, we see that God has carefully placed each part of the body right where he wanted it.

The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't, the parts we see and the parts we don't. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance. You are Christ's body—that's who you are! You must never forget this. Only as you accept your part of that body does your "part" mean anything. You're familiar with some of the parts that God has formed in his church, which is his "body": apostles; prophets; teachers; miracle; workers; healers; helpers; organizers; those who pray in tongues.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

The Good Samaritan Lived a Life of Intentional Love: *"Live creatively, friends. If someone falls into sin, forgivingly restore him, saving your critical comments for yourself. You might be needing forgiveness before the day's out. Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens, and so complete Christ's law. If you think you are too good for that, you are badly deceived." Galatians 6:1*

GOODNESS

There is Nothing Quite as Nice as a Kind and Loving Christian

Galatians 6 (The Msg)

Description of Christian Interaction and Relationships

Live creatively, friends. If someone falls into sin, forgivingly restore him, saving your critical comments for yourself. You might be needing forgiveness before the day's out. Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens, and so complete Christ's law. If you think you are too good for that, you are badly deceived. Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.

Be very sure now, you who have been trained to a self-sufficient maturity, that you enter into a generous common life with those who have trained you, sharing all the good things that you have and experience.

Don't be misled: No one makes a fool of God. What a person plants, he will harvest. The person who plants selfishness, ignoring the needs of others—ignoring God!—harvests a crop of weeds. All he'll have to show for his life is weeds! But the one who plants in response to God, letting God's Spirit do the growth work in him, harvests a crop of real life, eternal life.

So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit. Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith.

Now, in these last sentences, I want to emphasize in the bold scrawls of my personal handwriting the immense importance of what I have written to you. These people who are attempting to force the ways of circumcision on you have only one motive: They want an easy way to look good before others, lacking the courage to live by a faith that shares Christ's suffering and death. All their talk about the law is gas. They themselves don't keep the law! And they are highly selective in the laws they do observe. They only want you to be circumcised so they can boast of their success in recruiting you to their side. That is contemptible!

For my part, I am going to boast about nothing but the Cross of our Master, Jesus Christ. Because of that Cross, I have been crucified in relation to the world, set free from the stifling atmosphere of pleasing others and fitting into the little patterns that they dictate. Can't you see the

central issue in all this? It is not what you and I do—submit to circumcision, reject circumcision. It is what God is doing, and he is creating something totally new, a free life! All who walk by this standard are the true Israel of God—his chosen people. Peace and mercy on them!

Quite frankly, I don't want to be bothered anymore by these disputes. I have far more important things to do—the serious living of this faith. I bear in my body scars from my service to Jesus.

May what our Master Jesus Christ gives freely be deeply and personally yours, my friends. Oh, yes!

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

_____

_____

_____

The Gospel is All About the Sacrifice of Christ and It's Impact on People: *"He who believes what God said about His Son, has an additional witness within himself because he's been born again. The one who doesn't believe what God said is a liar because he refuses to accept the evidence God gave about His Son. But we believe what God said when He told us that He has given us eternal life through His Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has eternal life, and anyone who does not believe in the Son of God does not have eternal life." 1 John 5:10*

GOSPEL PRESENTATION

Christ Came to Earth, He Died for Us, He Ascended to Heaven–the Gospel

1 John 5 (CW)

The Gospel Plan of Salvation

Whoever believes that Jesus of Nazareth is the divine Son of God has been born of God, and whoever loves God will love His children. We know we love the children of God when we love God and are committed to keeping His commandments. Loving God means keeping His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. Everyone born of God can overcome the world. What is it that gives us victory over the world? Our faith in God. Who can overcome the world? Anyone who believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and goes to Him for help.

Jesus, the divine Son of God, was both baptized for us and shed His blood for us. The Holy Spirit has borne witness that Christ did this, and the Holy Spirit does not lie. In fact, there are three Witnesses who

testify to this truth. In heaven, it is the Father; on earth, it was Jesus Christ; and since Christ, it has been the fullness of the Holy Spirit. All Three speak with one voice.

There are also three earthly events which testify that this is true: Christ's baptism in the waters of Jordan; Christ shedding His blood on Calvary; and Christ's gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. These three events tell us what Christ has done. If we accept the testimony of witnesses as confirming a thing and making it legally binding, then why shouldn't we accept the testimony of God? God's testimony is infinitely more reliable than man's testimony, and He's already told us who His Son is. He who believes what God said about His Son, has an additional witness within himself because he's been born again. The one who doesn't believe what God said is a liar because he refuses to accept the evidence God gave about His Son. But we believe what God said when He told us that He has given us eternal life through His Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has eternal life, and anyone who does not believe in the Son of God does not have eternal life.

I wanted to point out these truths to you so you will know that as soon as you believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and accepted Him as your Lord and Savior, you were given eternal life. We have enough confidence in God to believe that if we ask Him for anything, He will listen. We know He hears us, and whatever we ask for, we know that He will give us according to His love.

If anyone sees a brother sinning in ignorance, he should pray for

him. If he repents of what he has done, God will forgive him and give him eternal life, But how can you ask God to forgive someone and give him eternal life if he stubbornly goes on sinning?

All wrongdoing is sin, but all sins are not the same, because God looks at the motive and the knowledge a person has of what is right. We know that anyone who is born of God does not deliberately keep on sinning. Christ, the Son of God, claims him as His own, and the wicked one cannot harm him. We know that we belong to God and that the world belongs to the wicked one.

We know that the Son of God has come so we might understand the truth about God. And we know God because we know His Son, Jesus Christ, through whom we have eternal life.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

_____

_____

_____

Don't Fight When No Principle is Involved: *"Submit yoursèlves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right." 1 Peter 2:13*

GOVERNMENT

Give Unto the Government What It is Due

1 Peter 2 (NIV)

God's View on the Authority of Government

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall."

They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your

credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Christ Provides Guidance for His People: *"God, my shepherd! I don't need a thing."*
Psalm 23:1

GUIDANCE

All Your Bases Are Covered

Psalm 23 (The Msg)

Shepherd's Psalm

God, my shepherd!

I don't need a thing. You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from.

True to your word, you let me catch my breath and send me in the right direction.

Even when the way goes through Death Valley, I'm not afraid when you walk at my side. Your trusty shepherd's crook makes me feel secure.

You serve me a six-course dinner right in front of my enemies.

You revive my drooping head; my cup brims with blessing.

Your beauty and love chase after me every day of my life.

I'm back home in the house of God for the rest of my life.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

The Good Samaritan Modeled Peace and Brotherhood: *"Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." Romans 14:19*

HARMONY

Yes, We All Can Get Along!

Romans 14 (NIV)

The Weak and the Strong

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.

It is written: " 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.' " So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.

So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself

and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Early Believers Taught a Wholistic Message of Health and Holiness: *"I pray for good fortune in everything you do, and for your good health—that your everyday affairs prosper, as well as your soul!" 3 John 1:2*

HEALTH

Healthy, Happy, Holy

3 John 1 (The Msg)

Spiritual and Physical Wellness

The Pastor, to my good friend Gaius: How truly I love you! We're the best of friends, and I pray for good fortune in everything you do, and for your good health—that your everyday affairs prosper, as well as your soul! I was most happy when some friends arrived and brought the news that you persist in following the way of Truth. Nothing could make me happier than getting reports that my children continue diligently in the way of Truth!

Dear friend, when you extend hospitality to Christian brothers and sisters, even when they are strangers, you make the faith visible. They've made a full report back to the church here, a message about your love. It's good work you're doing, helping these travelers on their way, hospitality worthy of God himself They set out under the banner of the Name, and get no help from unbelievers. So they deserve any support we can give them. In providing meals and a bed, we become their companions in spreading the Truth.

Earlier I wrote something along this line to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves being in charge, denigrates my counsel. If I come, you can be sure I'll hold him to account for spreading vicious rumors about us. As if that weren't bad enough, he not only refuses hospitality to traveling Christians but tries to stop others from welcoming them. Worse yet, instead of inviting them in he throws them out.

Friend, don't go along with evil. Model the good. The person who does good does God's work. The person who does evil falsifies God, doesn't know the first thing about God.

Everyone has a good word for Demetrius—the Truth itself stands up for Demetrius! We concur, and you know we don't hand out endorsements lightly.

I have a lot more things to tell you, but I'd rather not use pen and ink. I hope to be there soon in person and have a heart-to-heart talk.

Peace to you. The friends here say hello. Greet our friends there by name.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

If you want to get rid of somebody, just tell 'em something for their own good.

Frank McKinney Hubbard

On Every Occasion the Apostles Taught the Doctrines of Christ: *"Your job is to speak out on the things that make for solid doctrine. . . . Show them all this by doing it yourself, incorruptible in your teaching, your words solid and sane." Titus 2:1*

HEAR, BELIEVE, OBEY

Curriculum for Christians

Titus 2 (The Msg)

Teaching About Christ

Your job is to speak out on the things that make for solid doctrine. Guide older men into lives of temperance, dignity, and wisdom, into healthy faith, love, and endurance. Guide older women into lives of reverence so they end up as neither gossips nor drunks, but models of goodness. By looking at them, the younger women will know how to love their husbands and children, be virtuous and pure, keep a good house, be good wives. We don't want anyone looking down on God's Message because of their behavior. Also, guide the young men to live disciplined lives. But mostly, show them all this by doing it yourself, incorruptible in your teaching, your words solid and sane. Then anyone who is dead set against us, when he finds nothing weird or misguided, might eventually come around. Guide slaves into being loyal workers, a bonus to their masters—no back talk, no petty thievery. Then their good character will shine through their actions, adding luster to the teaching of our Savior God.

God's readiness to give and forgive is now public. Salvation's available for everyone! We're being shown how to turn our backs on a godless, indulgent life, and how to take on a God-filled, God-honoring life. This new life is starting right now, and is whetting our appetites for the glorious day when our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, appears. He offered himself as a sacrifice to free us from a dark, rebellious life into this good, pure life, making us a people he can be proud of, energetic in goodness.

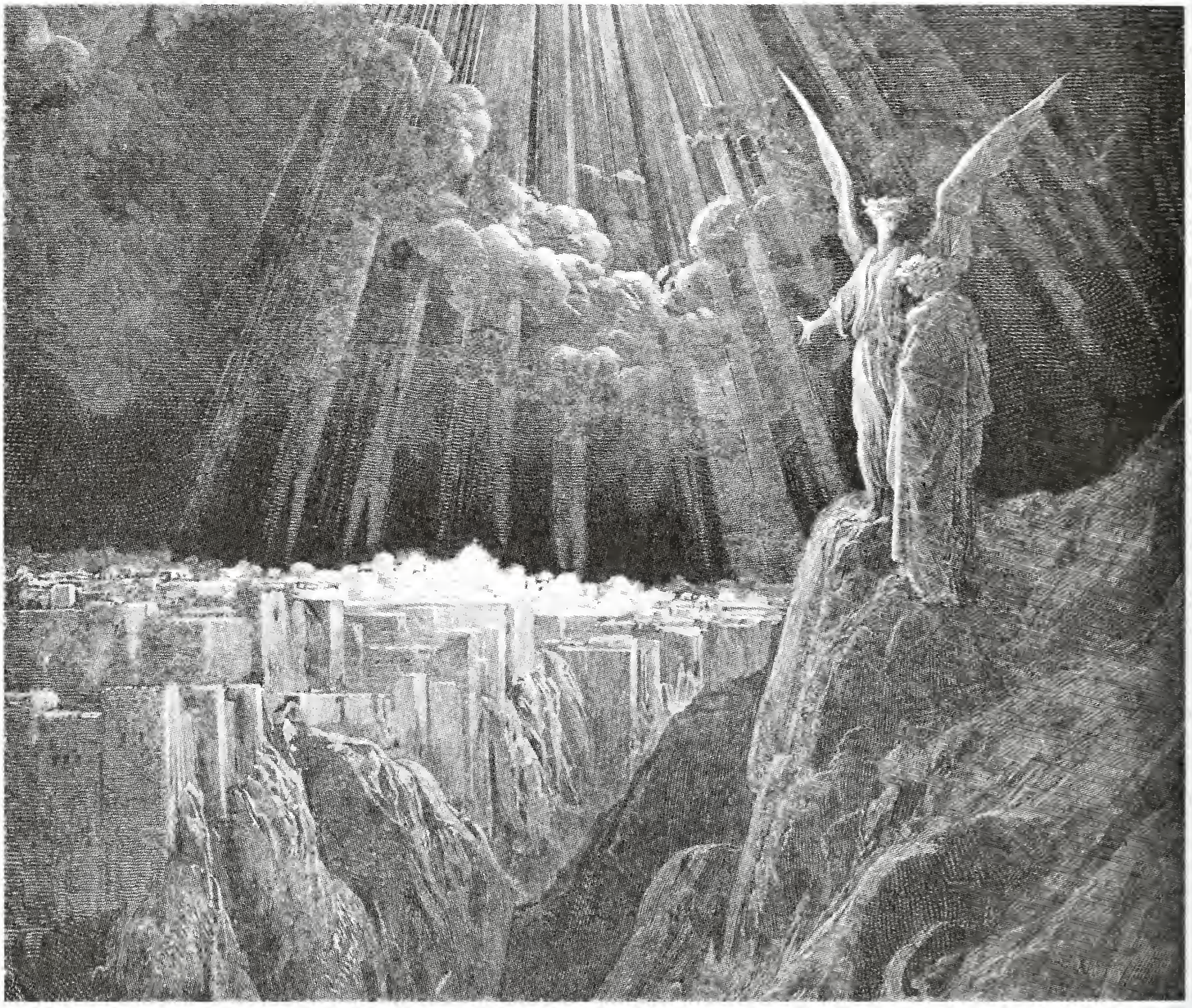
Tell them all this. Build up their courage, and discipline them if they get out of line. You're in charge. Don't let anyone put you down.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

"When you are through learning, you're through."

Vernon Law



Heaven is Where We Want to Be: *"The City shone with the glory of God and looked like a huge diamond glistening in the sun, clear as crystal. It settled where old Jerusalem had been before the earth was cleansed by fire and remade." Revelation 21:11*

HEAVEN

Imagine Heaven! Imagine Eternity!

Revelation 21 (CW)

Heaven and Eternal Life

Then one of the seven angels who had been given one of the seven bowls holding one of the seven last plagues said to me, "Come, let me show you the Holy City, the bride of the Lamb."

Then the Spirit carried me away to the top of a very high mountain and showed me the Holy City, New Jerusalem, as it descended from heaven. The City shone with the glory of God and looked like a huge diamond glistening in the sun, clear as crystal. It settled where old Jerusalem had been before the earth was cleansed by fire and remade. From where I was, I could look down on the City and see that it had a massive wall around it, with twelve gates and an angel at each of the gates. Above each gate was inscribed the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

There were three gates on each side of the City, three on the east, three on the north, three on the south, and three on the west.

The City and its walls rested on twelve foundations, each one hav-

ing the name of one of the twelve apostles of Christ inscribed on it. Then my accompanying angel took a golden yardstick in his hand and measured the City, its gates and its walls. The City was laid out in a square. Its length was the same as its width, and it measured fifteen hundred miles along each wall, with a height that was proportionate.

The wall was made of jasper, while the City itself was made of pure transparent gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the City and its walls were made of all kinds of precious stones of varying colors. Each of the twelve gates was made of one huge pearl, and the streets of the City were made of pure gold, yet they were as transparent as glass.

I didn't see any temple in the New Jerusalem. Actually, there was no need of one, since God and the Lamb were personally there. The Temple I had expected to see was now located outside the City as a memorial of what God had done for His people. The City was so filled with light that no one needed the sun or the moon to light it. The glory of the presence of God and the Lamb was its light. The City was made for the redeemed of this world, and people from every nation walked in its light.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Everybody talking 'bout heaven ain't goin' there.

Negro Spiritual

Communion with Heavenly Inhabitants: *"Jesus' appearance changed in front of them. His face became as bright as the sun and his clothes as white as light. Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared to them and were talking with Jesus." Matthew 17:2*

HEAVENLY INHABITANTS

REPRESENTATIVES OF THINGS TO COME

Matthew 17 (GW)

Transfiguration

After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John (the brother of James) and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone. Jesus' appearance changed in front of them. His face became as bright as the sun and his clothes as white as light. Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared to them and were talking with Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it's good that we're here. If you want, I'll put up three tents here—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

He was still speaking when a bright cloud overshadowed them. Then a voice came out of the cloud and said, "This is my Son, whom I love and with whom I am pleased. Listen to him!"

The disciples were terrified when they heard this and fell face down on the ground. But Jesus touched them and said, "Get up, and don't be afraid!" As they raised their heads, they saw no one but Jesus.

On their way down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen. Wait until the Son of Man has been brought back to life." So the disciples asked him, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

Jesus answered, "Elijah is coming and will put everything in order again. Actually, I can guarantee that Elijah has already come. Yet, people treated him as they pleased because they didn't recognize him. In the same way they're going to make the Son of Man suffer." Then the disciples understood that he was talking about John the Baptizer.

When they came to a crowd, a man came up to Jesus, knelt in front of him, and said, "Sir, have mercy on my son. He suffers from seizures. Often he falls into fire or water. I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn't cure him."

Jesus replied, "You unbelieving and corrupt generation! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him here to me!"

Jesus ordered the demon to come out of the boy. At that moment the boy was cured. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and asked, "Why couldn't we force the demon out of the boy?"

He told them, "Because you have so little faith. I can guarantee this truth: If your faith is the size of a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

While they were traveling together in Galilee, Jesus told them, "The Son of Man will be betrayed and handed over to people. They will kill him, but on the third day he will be brought back to life." Then the disciples became very sad.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

The Holy Spirit is God's Gift: *"The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." John 14:26*

HOLY SPIRIT

Profiling the Spirit

John 14 (NIV); Romans 8 (CW); John 16 (CW)

Work of the Spirit

"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.

"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I

leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14)

"The Holy Spirit is always ready to help us. We don't even know how we should pray or what we need, and when we think we do, we don't know how to say it right. The Holy Spirit takes our deepest emotions and longings and put them into the beautiful language of heaven, pleading with God for us as if we were right there.

"Actually, God knows our hearts and what the Holy Spirit is going to say even before He puts them into words, because the Spirit is in harmony with God 's will for us. We know that God will make everything that happens to us in this life come out to our eternal good, as long as we trust Him and remain true to the purpose for which He called us." (Romans 8)

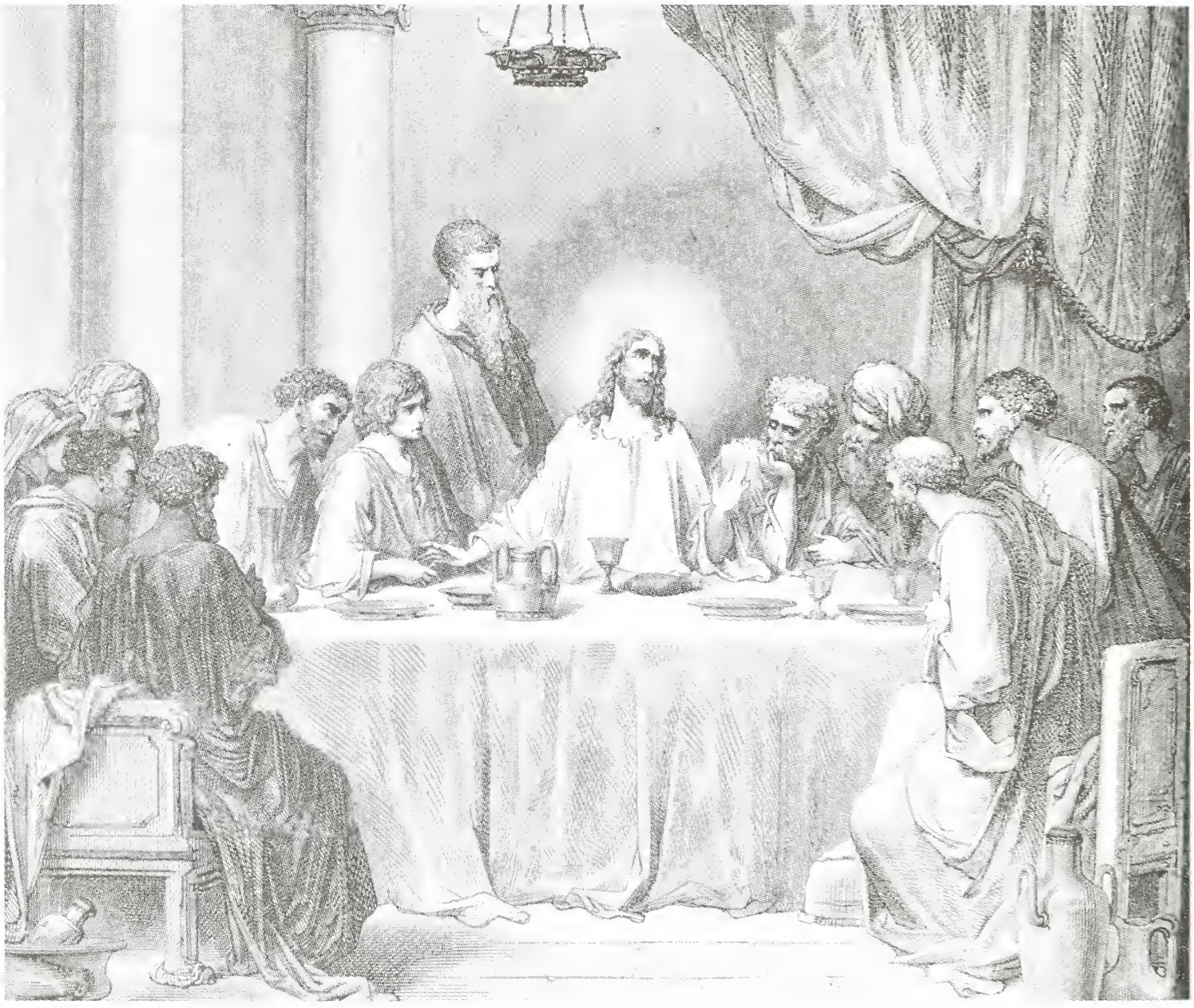
"I'm telling you the truth. I must leave you, because if I don't the Holy Spirit can't come in His fullness to you. But as soon as I leave, I'll make arrangements for Him to come. When He comes, He'll go ahead of you, convicting people of their sins, urging them to turn away from sinning and warning them that someday they will be held accountable for everything they do. He'll convict them of sin when they don't believe in me.

"He'll continue to hold up the standard of righteousness, because I will return to my Father where they can no longer see me. And He'll make it self-evident that someday they will be held accountable for

what they have done, just as Satan is already held accountable."There are a lot of other things I could tell you, but you've heard enough and are not really ready for any more. When the Holy Spirit comes, He'll begin teaching where I left off and will share with you more and more truth. He won't be talking about Himself, but He'll say whatever the Father directs Him to say, including things yet to come. He'll talk about me because He'll be coming to carry on my mission, and He'll help you see things more clearly." (John 16)

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



Jesus Set the Symbolic Model of Foot Washing: *"So if I, the Master and Teacher, washed your feet, you must now wash each other's feet. I've laid down a pattern for you. What I've done, you do." John 13:14*

HUMILITY

Serving and Servant Leadership

John 13 (The Msg)

The Last Supper and Foot Washing

Just before the Passover Feast, Jesus knew that the time had come to leave this world to go to the Father. Having loved his dear companions, he continued to love them right to the end. It was supper time. The Devil by now had Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, firmly in his grip, all set for the betrayal.

Jesus knew that the Father had put him in complete charge of everything, that he came from God and was on his way back to God. So he got up from the supper table, set aside his robe, and put on an apron. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples, drying them with his apron. When he got to Simon Peter, Peter said, "Master, you wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You don't understand now what I'm doing, but it will be clear enough to you later."

Peter persisted, "You're not going to wash my feet—ever!" Jesus said, "If I don't wash you, you can't be part of what I'm doing."

"Master!" said Peter. "Not only my feet, then. Wash my hands! Wash my head!"

Jesus said, "If you've had a bath in the morning, you only need your feet washed now and you're clean from head to toe. My concern, you understand, is holiness, not hygiene. So now you're clean. But not every one of you." (He knew who was betraying him. That's why he said, "Not every one of you.") After he had finished washing their feet, he took his robe, put it back on, and went back to his place at the table.

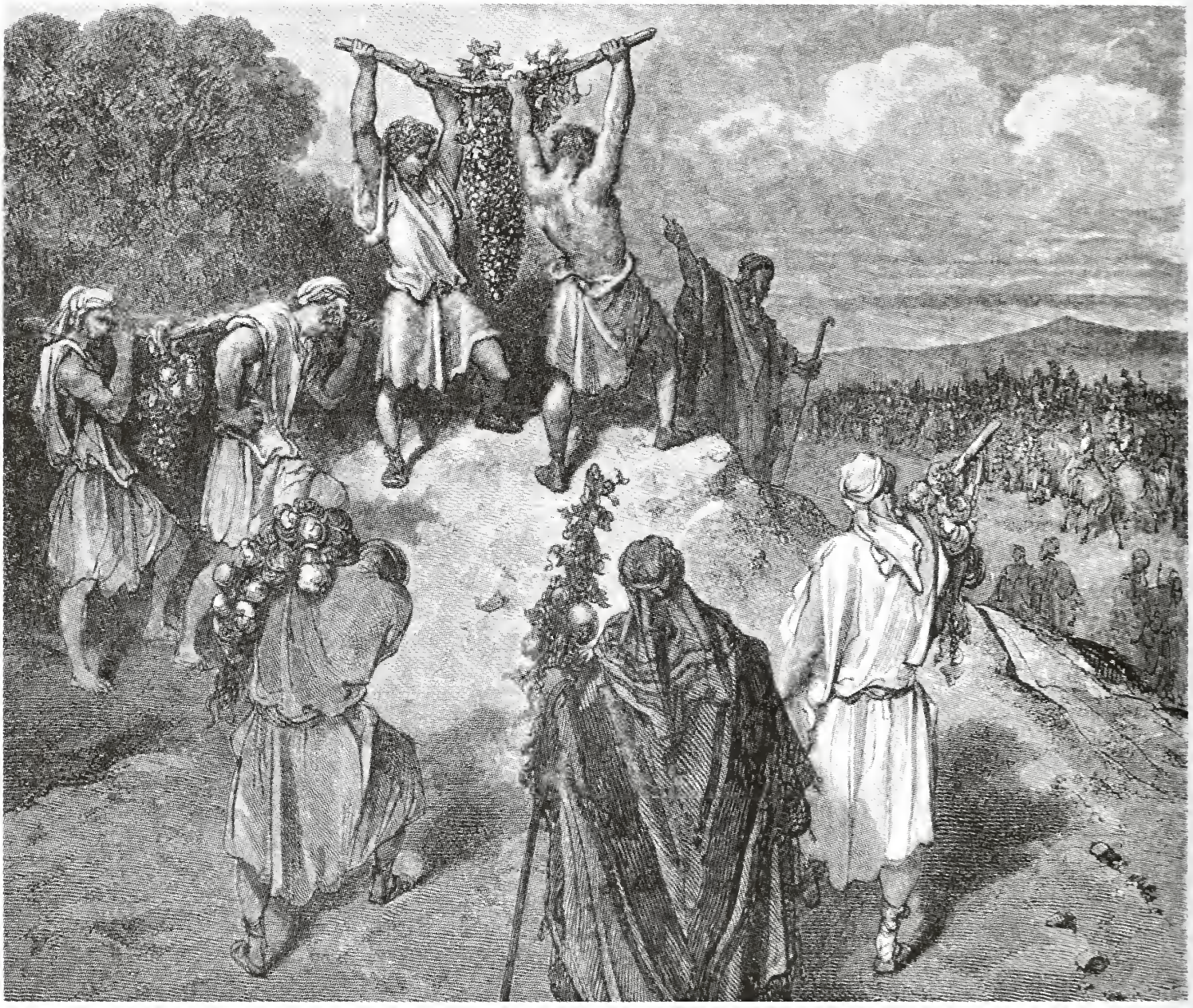
Then he said, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You address me as 'Teacher' and 'Master,' and rightly so. That is what I am. So if I, the Master and Teacher, washed your feet, you must now wash each other's feet. I've laid down a pattern for you. What I've done, you do. I'm only pointing out the obvious. A servant is not ranked above his master; an employee doesn't give orders to the employer. If you understand what I'm telling you, act like it—and live a blessed life.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Take the gentle path.

George Herbert



The Majority is Not Always Right: *[Majority] "The only problem is that the people who live there are giants. [Minority] "Look at what God can do! Look at what He's done already! With His help we can do it!" Numbers 13:33*

INFLUENCE

The Minority Report

Numbers 13-14 (CW)

The Twelve Spies

While the children of Israel were camped in the Wilderness of Paran, the Lord said to Moses, "Choose one man from each of the twelve tribes to go and explore the land of Canaan which I promised to give to the children of Israel, and have them bring back a report of what they saw."

Moses obeyed and chose twelve men, one from each tribe, and sent them into the land of Canaan. All of them were leaders among the people. Moses charged them, "Go from here northward into the southern part of the land, then into the mountains. Find out what the land is like, what kind of people live there, whether there are many or few and how strong they are. Find out what the country itself is like. What kind of towns do the people live in? Are they open cities or are their cities fortified? What is the soil like? Is it fertile or not? How much of the land is wooded and how much is open field? And bring back some of the grapes that grow there."

So the twelve men left the camp and went to explore the land all the way from the Wilderness of Zin in the south to the city of Rehob near the entrance to the Hanath Pass in the north. After they explored the land, they came to the Valley of Eshcol where they cut off a branch from a vine that had a huge cluster of grapes on it. This cluster was so heavy that it took two men to carry it hanging from a pole between them. They also took with them samples of pomegranates and figs.

The men explored the land for forty days and then returned home. The men showed everybody the fruit of the land and told them what they had seen. They said to Moses, "We explored the land as you told us to and it's truly a land that is rich and fertile, a land with an abundance of fruit. The only problem is that the people who live there are giants. They're a powerful people and their cities are large and protected with high walls. They're the descendants of Anak the giant. The Amalekites live in the south; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the mountains to the north; and the original Canaanites are scattered along the Jordan River and on toward the Mediterranean Sea."

Then Caleb and Joshua called for silence and said to the people, "Let's not be afraid to go up and take the land! Look at what God can do! Look at what He's done already! With His help we can do it!"

But the other ten men said, "No! We can't take the land! The people there are giants! They're much bigger and stronger than we are! We'll never do it!"

Then the ten went among the people and frightened them even more with greatly exaggerated and contradictory stories, saying, "Look, we were there! The land can't produce enough food to feed the people who are there now, so what would happen if we went there? The place is full of giants! We'll never defeat them! They're descendants of Anak. We felt like grasshoppers next to them, and that's the way we looked to them!"

The people believed the exaggerated and contradictory reports of the ten and cried loudly all night about their misfortunate for having left Egypt.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

God is More Interested in Quality Than Quantity: *"So 22,000 men went back home, and 10,000 were left. The Lord said to Gideon, There are still too many men. Bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there'."* *Judges 7:3*

INSECURITY

Perils and Progress of an Insecure Leader

Judges 7 (GW)

Gideon and His Band of Soldiers

Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the troops with him got up early and camped above En Harod. Midian's camp was north of him at the hill of Moreh in the valley.

The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many men with you for me to hand Midian over to you. Israel might brag and say, 'We saved ourselves.' Announce to the troops, 'Whoever is scared or frightened should leave Mount Gilead and go back home.' " So 22,000 men went back home, and 10,000 were left.

The Lord said to Gideon, "There are still too many men. Bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. So Gideon took the men down to the water. The Lord said to him, "Separate those who lap water with their tongues like dogs from those who kneel down to drink." Three hundred men lapped water with their hands to their

mouths. All the rest of the men knelt down to drink water. Then the Lord said to Gideon, "With the 300 men who lapped water I will save you and hand Midian over to you. All the other men should go home." So Gideon sent the other men of Israel home, but the 300 men who stayed kept all the supplies and rams' horns.

That night the Lord said to Gideon, "Attack! Go into the camp! I will hand it over to you. But if you're afraid to go, take your servant Purah to the camp with you. Listen to what people are saying. After that, you will have the courage to go into the camp and attack it. "So Gideon and his servant Purah went to the edge of the camp. Midian, Amalek, and all of Kedem were spread out in the valley like a swarm of locusts. There were so many camels that they could not be counted. They were as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore. When Gideon got there, he heard a man telling his friend a dream. The man said, "I had a strange dream. There was a loaf of barley bread rolling around in the camp of Midian. When it got to the command post, the loaf of bread hit that tent so hard that the tent collapsed, turned upside down, and fell flat." His friend replied, "That can only be the sword of Gideon, son of Joash, from Israel. God is going to hand Midian and the whole camp over to him." When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped the Lord. Then he went back to the camp of Israel and said, "Attack! The Lord will hand Midian's camp over to you." Gideon divided the 300 men into three companies. He gave them each rams' horns and jars with torches inside. He said to them,

"Watch me, and do what I do. When I come to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. When I and those with me blow our rams' horns, then the rest of you around the camp do the same and shout, 'For the Lord and for Gideon!' "

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Paul Used the Life and Lessons of Jesus as His Example: *"I keep hearing of the love and faith you have for the Master Jesus, which brims over to other Christians. And I keep praying that this faith we hold in common keeps showing up in the good things we do, and that people recognize Christ in all of it." Philemon 1:5*

INTERCESSION

Power in Prayer for Others

Philemon 1 (The Msg)

Thanksgiving for Others

I, Paul, am a prisoner for the sake of Christ, here with my brother Timothy. I write this letter to you, Philemon, my good friend and companion in this work—also to our sister Apphia, to Archippus, a real trooper, and to the church that meets in your house. God's best to you! Christ's blessings on you!

Every time your name comes up in my prayers, I say, "Oh, thank you, God!" I keep hearing of the love and faith you have for the Master Jesus, which brims over to other Christians. And I keep praying that this faith we hold in common keeps showing up in the good things we do, and that people recognize Christ in all of it. Friend, you have no idea how good your love makes me feel, doubly so when I see your hospitality to fellow believers. In line with all this I have a favor to ask of you. As Christ's ambassador and now a prisoner for him, I wouldn't hesitate to command this if I thought it necessary, but I'd rather make it a personal request.

While here in jail, I've fathered a child, so to speak. And here he is, hand-carrying this letter—Onesimus! He was useless to you before; now he's useful to both of us. I'm sending him back to you, but it feels like I'm cutting off my right arm in doing so. I wanted in the worst way to keep him here as your stand-in to help out while I'm in jail for the Message. But I didn't want to do anything behind your back, make you do a good deed that you hadn't willingly agreed to.

Maybe it's all for the best that you lost him for a while. You're getting him back now for good—and no mere slave this time, but a true Christian brother! That's what he was to me—he'll be even more than that to you.

So if you still consider me a comrade-in-arms, welcome him back as you would me. If he damaged anything or owes you anything, chalk it up to my account. This is my personal signature—Paul—and I stand behind it.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Prayer is not a device for getting our will done through heaven, but a desire that God's will may be done on earth through us.

Unknown

Jesus Said He Provides Living Water: *"Come! Everyone who is thirsty, come to the waters. You who have no money, come, buy and eat. Come! Buy the fresh juice of the grape. Come and buy milk. It will cost you nothing." Isaiah 55:1*

INVITATION

A Universal Invitation

Isaiah 55 (CW)

God's Appeal

The Lord says, "Come! Everyone who is thirsty, come to the waters. You who have no money, come, buy and eat. Come! Buy the fresh juice of the grape. Come and buy milk. It will cost you nothing. Why should you spend money for that which isn't bread or work for that which doesn't satisfy?

Listen to me! Do what I say and your soul will be delighted with the best food there is. Listen to me, my people, and come to me for food. Listen to what I have to say and you will live and not die. I will renew my covenant with you and give you the blessings I promised David. I made him a commander and leader of Israel and through him gave witness of my power. Through you I will summon nations you don't even know about. They will come running to you because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, who has glorified you."

Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is

near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord who will have mercy on them and to our God who freely pardons.

The Lord says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts and my ways higher than your ways. Just as the rain and snow come down from heaven and don't return until the earth is watered, causing it to sprout and bring forth fruit for the eater and seeds for the sower, so the word that goes out of my mouth will not return to me empty but will succeed in bringing forth the fruit for which I sent it.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Life's most persistent and urgent question is, what are you doing for others?

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Jesus Modeled a Joyful Life of Loving Service: *"I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands." 2 John 5*

JOYFUL LOVE

How to Maintain Your Joy

2 John 1 (NIV)

Life in Christ

The elder: To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth—and not I only, but also all who know the truth—because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love.

It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs

ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.

I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

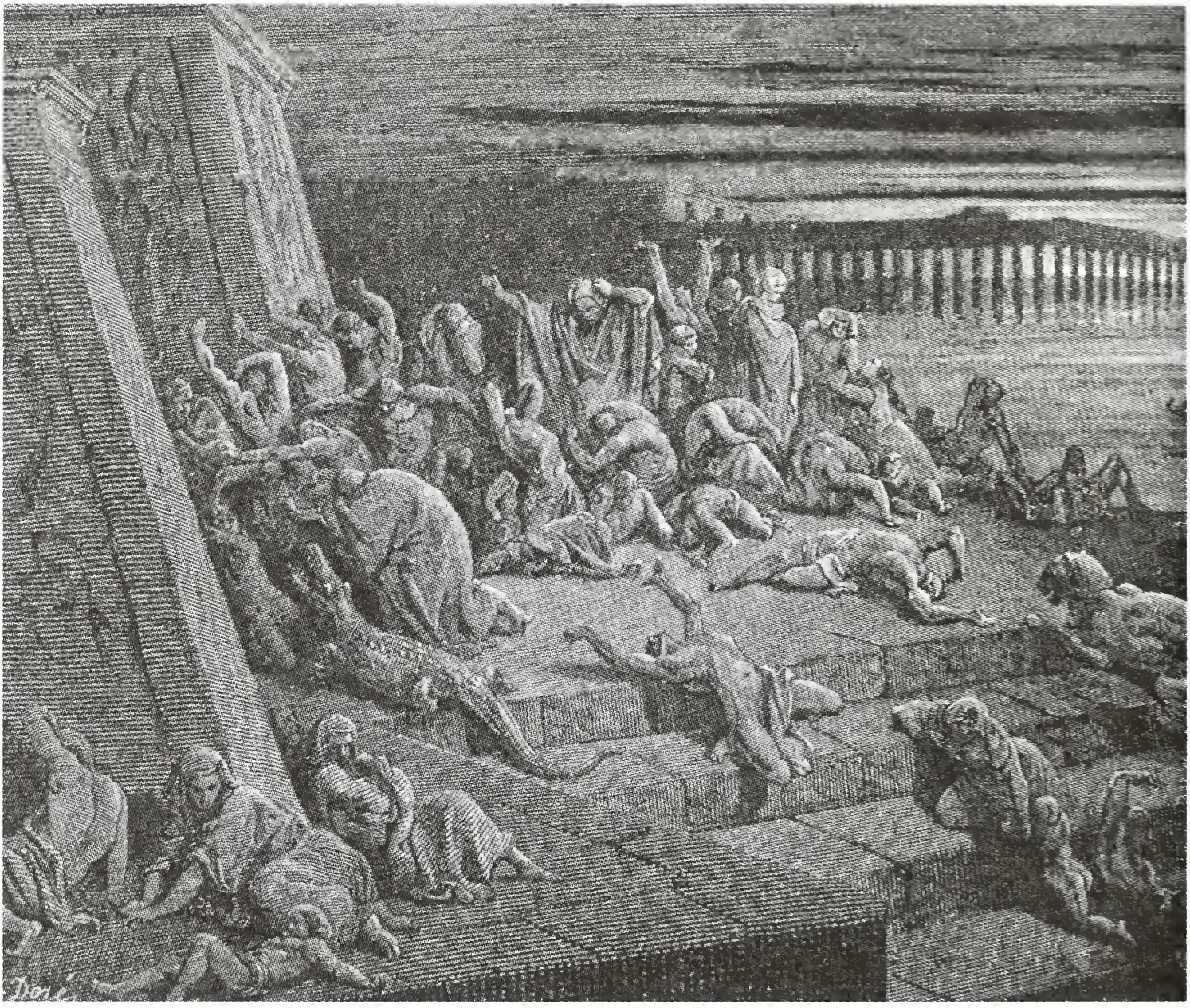
The children of your chosen sister send their greetings.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Be good, keep your feet dry, your eyes open, your heart at peace, and your soul in the joy of Christ.

Unknown



God's Scrutiny Includes All Time, People, and Nations: *"Quiet now! Reverent silence before me, God, the Master! Time's up. My Judgment Day is near: the Holy Day is all set, the invited guests made holy." Zephaniah 1:7*

JUDGMENTS

Get Help While You Can

Zephaniah 1 (The Msg)

Messages to Wake Judah

God's Message to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah. It came during the reign of Josiah son of Amon, who was king of Judah: "I'm going to make a clean sweep of the earth, a thorough housecleaning." God's Decree.

"Men and women and animals, including birds and fish—anything and everything that causes sin—will go, but especially people. I'll start with Judah and everybody who lives in Jerusalem. I'll sweep the place clean of every trace of the sex-and-religion Baal shrines and their priests.

I'll get rid of the people who sneak up to their rooftops at night to worship the star gods and goddesses; also those who continue to worship God but cover their bases by worshiping other king-gods as well; not to mention those who've dumped God altogether, no longer giving him a thought or offering a prayer.

Quiet now! Reverent silence before me, God, the Master! Time's up. My Judgment Day is near: the Holy Day is all set, the invited guests made holy. On the Holy Day, God's Judgment Day, I will punish the leaders and the royal sons; I will punish those who dress up like foreign priests and priestesses, who introduce pagan prayers and practices; and I'll punish all who import pagan superstitions that turn holy places into hellholes.

Judgment Day! God's Decree! Cries of panic from the city's Fish Gate, Cries of terror from the city's Second Quarter, sounds of great crashing from the hills! Wail, you shopkeepers on Market Street! Moneymaking has had its day. The god Money is dead.

On Judgment Day, I'll search through every closet and alley in Jerusalem. I'll find and punish those who are sitting it out, fat and lazy, amusing themselves and taking it easy, who think, 'God doesn't do anything, good or bad. He isn't involved, so neither are we.' But just wait. They'll lose everything they have, money and house and land. They'll build a house and never move in. They'll plant vineyards and never taste the wine.

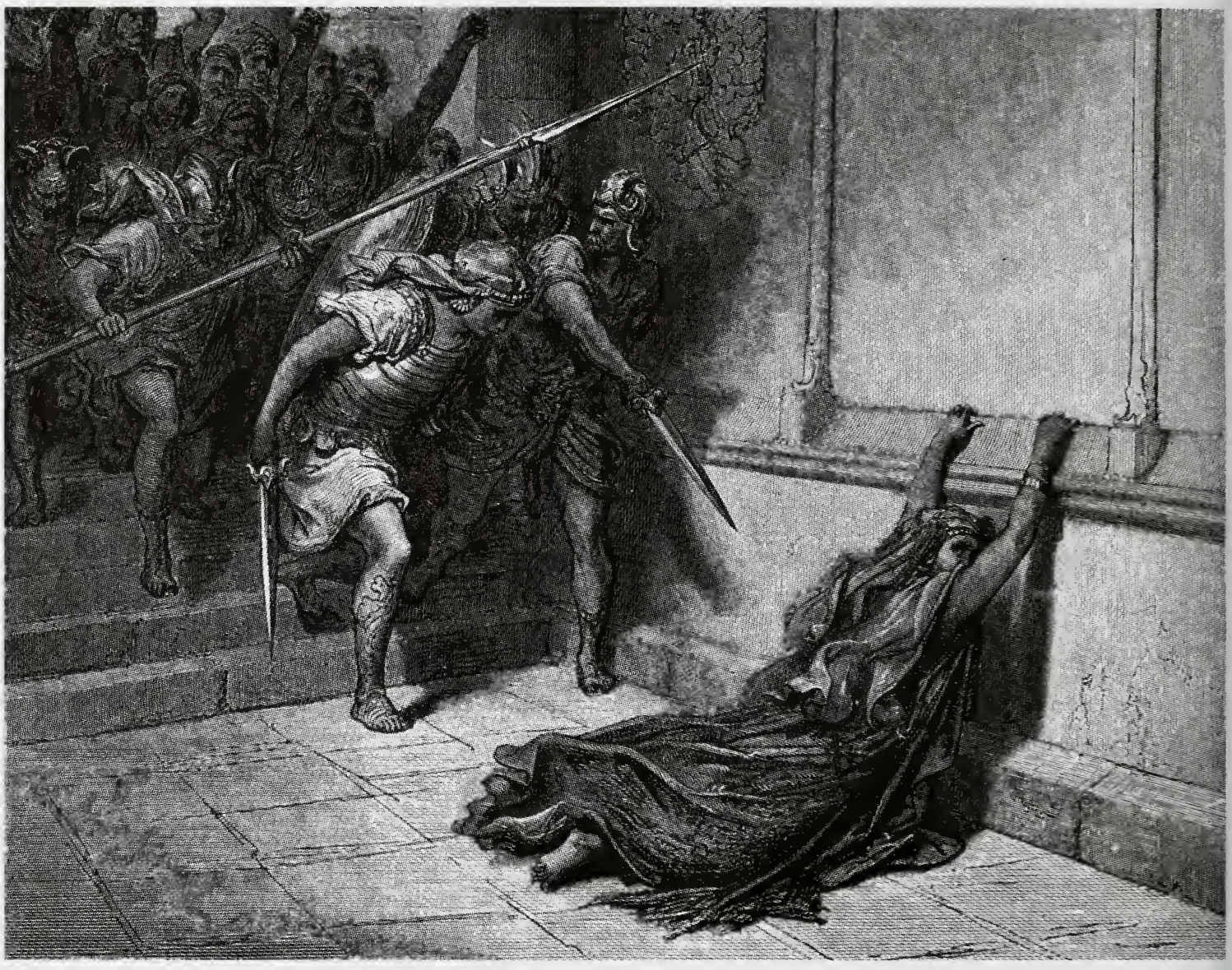
The Great Judgment Day of God is almost here. It's countdown time:... seven, six, five, four... Bitter and noisy cries on my Judgment Day, even strong men screaming for help. Judgment Day is payday—my anger paid out: a day of distress and anguish, a day of catastrophic doom, a day of darkness at noon, a day of black storm clouds, a day of bloodcurdling war cries, as forts are assaulted, as defenses are smashed.

I'll make things so bad they won't know what hit them. They'll walk around groping like the blind. They've sinned against God! Their blood will be poured out like old dishwater, their guts shoveled into slop buckets. Don't plan on buying your way out. Your money is worthless for this.

This is the Day of God's Judgment—my wrath! I care about sin with fiery passion—A fire to burn up the corrupted world, a wildfire finish to the corrupting people."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



People Always Need a Place of Refuge: *"When you cross the Jordan River and enter Canaan, select certain cities to be places of refuge. Anyone who unintentionally kills another person may run to them. These cities will be places of refuge from any relative who can avenge the death. So anyone accused of murder will not have to die until he has had a trial in front of the community." Numbers 35:6*

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Establishing Places of Safety

Numbers 35 (GW)

Cities of Refuge

The Lord said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites: When you cross the Jordan River and enter Canaan, select certain cities to be places of refuge. Anyone who unintentionally kills another person may run to them. These cities will be places of refuge from any relative who can avenge the death. So anyone accused of murder will not have to die until he has had a trial in front of the community. Six cities will be places of refuge for Israelites, foreigners, and strangers among you. Anyone who unintentionally kills another person may flee to these cities.

But if any of you uses an iron weapon to kill another person, you are a murderer. Murderers must be put to death. If any of you picks up a stone as a weapon and uses it to kill another person, you are a murderer. Murderers must be put to death. Or if any of you picks up a piece of wood and uses it to kill another person, you are a murderer. Murderers must be put to death. The relative who can avenge the death

must make sure a murderer is put to death. When he catches up with the murderer, he must kill him. If any of you kills someone you hate by shoving him or by deliberately throwing something at him, or if you beat your enemy to death with your bare hands, you must be put to death. You are a murderer. The relative who can avenge the death must kill you when he catches up with you, because you are a murderer.

But suppose you accidentally kill someone who wasn't your enemy. Maybe you shoved him or threw something at him but didn't mean to kill him. Or suppose you drop a big stone, and someone is killed. However, you didn't know the person was there, he wasn't your enemy, and you weren't trying to harm him. Then the community must use these rules in order to decide if you {are innocent} or if the dead person's relative can avenge the death. {If you are innocent,} the community must protect you from that relative. They must take you back to the city of refuge you fled to. You must live there until the death of the chief priest who was anointed with the holy oil.

But don't go outside the city of refuge you fled to. If the relative who can avenge the death finds you outside the city of refuge and kills you, the relative is not guilty of murder. Accused murderers must stay in their city of refuge until the death of the chief priest. They may go back to their own property only after his death.

Whoever kills another person will be put to death as a murderer only on the testimony of more than one witness. No one can be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.

Never accept a cash payment in exchange for the life of a convicted murderer who has been given the death penalty. Murderers must be put to death.

An accused murderer who has fled to a city of refuge must never go back and live on his own land before the death of the chief priest. Don't accept a cash payment to allow him to do this.

You must not pollute the land where you live. Murder is what pollutes the land. The land where a murder was committed can never make peace with the Lord except through the death of the murderer."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Like Balaam Was, People in Endtime Will be Deceived: *"Those who do not love the truth, which is their only defense, will be swept away by all kinds of deceptions brought about by the power of evil. Because of this, they have no protection against these delusions and will end up believing a lie." 2 Thessalonians 2:11*

LAST DAY DELUSIONS

Be Careful! Deception is Possible

2 Thessalonians 2 (CW)

Last Day Deceptions

Let me further clarify for you what I said about the coming of the Lord and the gathering of believers. Don't become unsettled, alarmed or caught up in a state of excitement by those who tell you that the Lord's coming is very soon, whether they claim to have the gift of prophecy or some written communication from me. And don't believe the Jews when they tell you I'm preaching that Christ will soon come to set up His kingdom by making Israel a world power. Neither of these things is true.

Don't let anyone deceive you. Christ will not come again until many believers leave the faith and the man of sin leads a global rebellion against God's law. He will exalt himself by opposing all those who worship God according to the Scriptures. He will sit in his own temple and speak for God as if he were God. Don't you remember that I told you all this before?

You know that there are reasons why all these things are being held

back and that only when the proper time comes will the man of lawlessness be allowed to appear. However, the force of his lawlessness is already at work, even though it is being held back at present until the One holding it lets go. Then the man of lawlessness will be seen for what he is, and the Lord will overcome him with the breath of His mouth and destroy him by the brightness of His coming.

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the plan of Satan, who will display his power in counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders. Those who do not love the truth, which is their only defense, will be swept away by all kinds of deceptions brought about by the power of evil. Because of this, they have no protection against these delusions and will end up believing a lie. However, they will not be judged because they believed a lie but because they did not believe the truth and continued to take pleasure in wickedness.

But we thank God for you, my brothers, because you are beloved of the Lord and are among the firstfruits of the gospel in Macedonia. You were drawn to the Lord by the Holy Spirit and you accepted the truth as soon as you heard it.

God has not only spoken to you through the preaching of the gospel, but He has called you to share in the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. So stand firm and hold on to the truths we taught you when we were with you, as well as the truths we shared with you in our letters.

May God the Father, who loved us so much and by His grace encouraged us and gave us hope, continue to give you courage to stand firm in what you have been taught and in what you believe.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Dreams and Visions Should Not be Ignored: *"After this I will pour out my Spirit on everyone without regard to office or function. Your sons and daughters will prophesy; your old men will dream dreams and your young men will see visions. I will pour out my Spirit on my servants, both men and women." Joel 2:28*

LAST DAY EVENTS

The Deal on Dreams and Visions

Joel 2 (CW)

Dreams, Visions, and Prophecy

The Lord says, "It is not too late. Return to me with all your hearts. Come to me with fasting and weeping over your sins. Tear your hearts, not your clothes." Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and full of compassion, patient and abounding in love. He keeps His promise and is waiting to forgive, not to punish. Who knows? He might have pity on us and again bless us with abundant crops. Then we can again bring to Him the firstfruits of our grain and grapes as we did before.

Blow the trumpet on Mount Zion! Call a solemn assembly. Announce a day of fasting and prayer. Assemble all the people; sanctify the congregation, including the aged, children and those nursing at the breast. Invite the bridegroom and his bride; let them leave the bridal chamber and come to the holy fast. Let the priests and those who minister between the Temple porch and the altar weep and pray. Let them say to the Lord, "Spare your people; have pity on your inher-

itance. Don't let the nations despise us and make us an object of scorn. Don't let them say, `Where is this great God of yours?'"

Then the Lord heard and had pity on His people and became concerned for His land. He said to them, "I will give you grain and grapes and olive oil that the locust destroyed, and once again you will have plenty to eat. I will bless you, and other nations will no longer scorn you."

Don't be afraid, O land, but be glad and rejoice; the Lord will do wonderful things for you. Don't be afraid, you creatures of the wild, for the open fields are turning green again. The trees are budding and will soon bear fruit. The fig tree and the vine are getting ready to yield their riches.

Be glad, O people of Zion; rejoice in the Lord your God. He has given you the early rain to water the seed and the latter rain to ripen the harvest. The threshing floor will be filled with wheat and the vats beside the presses will overflow with oil and the rich juice of grapes.

The Lord says, "I will restore to you what you lost during the years the locusts were in the land. Your land will be filled with plenty. You will eat until you are full. You will praise the Lord for what He has done. You will no longer be put to shame. You will see that I am in your midst. You will know that I am the Lord your God and there is none else. You will no longer be mocked and shamed by your enemies.

After this I will pour out my Spirit on everyone without regard to office or function. Your sons and daughters will prophesy; your old

men will dream dreams and your young men will see visions. I will pour out my Spirit on my servants, both men and women.

In the last days there will be signs in the sky and on the earth. There will be blood, fire and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon will be as red as blood before the final day of judgment and the coming of the Lord.

All who believe and call upon the Lord for help will be saved. My people in Mount Zion and Jerusalem will be delivered. Among the remnant will be those whom I called out of Babylon."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

David Dies Like All Men: *"Now these are the last words of David. Thus says David the son of Jesse; thus says the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel: "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue." 2 Samuel 23:1*

LAST WORDS

The Legacy of Leadership

2 Samuel 23 (NKJV [English] & LBA [Spanish])

King David's Final Words (NKJV)

Now these are the last words of David. Thus says David the son of Jesse; thus says the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel: "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue.

The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me: 'he who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.'"Although my house is not so with God, yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For this is all my salvation and all my desire; will He not make it increase?

But the sons of rebellion shall all be as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands. But the man who touches them must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, and they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place."

Ultimas palabras de David (LBA)

Estas son las últimas palabras de David. Declara David, el hijo de Isaí, y declara el hombre que fue exaltado, el ungido del Dios de Jacob, el dulce salmista de Israel: El Espíritu del Señor habló por mí, y su palabra estuvo en mi lengua.

Dijo el Dios de Israel, me habló la Roca de Israel: "El que con justicia gobierna sobre los hombres, que en el temor de Dios gobierna, es como la luz de la mañana cuando se levanta el sol en una mañana sin nubes, cuando brota de la tierra la tierna hierba por el resplandor del sol tras la lluvia."

En verdad, ¿no es así mi casa para con Dios? Pues El ha hecho conmigo un pacto eterno, ordenado en todo y seguro. Porque toda mi salvación y todo mi deseo, ¿no los hará ciertamente germinar?

Mas los indignos, todos ellos serán arrojados como espinos, porque no pueden ser tomados con la mano; y el hombre que los toque ha de estar armado con hierro y con asta de lanza, y por fuego serán consumidos completamente en su lugar.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

God isn't interested in how many talents we have—He's interested in how we are using the talents we have.

Unknown

Believers Should Solve Problems Among Themselves Without Resorting to Legal Means: *"How dare you take each other to court! When you think you have been wronged, does it make any sense to go before a court that knows nothing of God's ways instead of a family of Christians?" 1 Corinthians 6:1*

LAWSUITS

Alternative to Litigation

1 Corinthians 6 (The Msg)

Lawsuits Among Believers

How dare you take each other to court! When you think you have been wronged, does it make any sense to go before a court that knows nothing of God's ways instead of a family of Christians? The day is coming when the world is going to stand before a jury made up of Christians. If someday you are going to rule on the world's fate, wouldn't it be a good idea to practice on some of these smaller cases? Why, we're even going to judge angels! So why not these everyday affairs? As these disagreements and wrongs surface, why would you ever entrust them to the judgment of people you don't trust in any other way?

I say this as bluntly as I can to wake you up to the stupidity of what you're doing. Is it possible that there isn't one levelheaded person among you who can make fair decisions when disagreements and disputes come up? I don't believe it. And here you are taking each other to court before people who don't even believe in God! How can they

render justice if they don't believe in the God of justice?

These court cases are an ugly blot on your community. Wouldn't it be far better to just take it, to let yourselves be wronged and forget it? All you're doing is providing fuel for more wrong, more injustice, bringing more hurt to the people of your own spiritual family.

Don't you realize that this is not the way to live? Unjust people who don't care about God will not be joining in his kingdom. Those who use and abuse each other, use and abuse sex, use and abuse the earth and everything in it, don't qualify as citizens in God's kingdom. A number of you know from experience what I'm talking about, for not so long ago you were on that list. Since then, you've been cleaned up and given a fresh start by Jesus, our Master, our Messiah, and by our God present in us, the Spirit.

Just because something is technically legal doesn't mean that it's spiritually appropriate. If I went around doing whatever I thought I could get by with, I'd be a slave to my whims.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

_____

_____

_____

We flatter those we scarcely know; we please the fleeting guest; yet oft we deal a thoughtless blow to those we love best.

Fairness, Justice and Mercy Were to Characterize the Israelites: *"Sanctify the fiftieth year; make it a holy year. Proclaim freedom all over the land to everyone who lives in it—a Jubilee for you: Each person will go back to his family's property and reunite with his extended family. The fiftieth year is your Jubilee year." Leviticus 25:10*

LIBERATION

A Dated System with a Universal Principle

Leviticus 25 (The Msg)

Year of Jubilee

God spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, "Speak to the People of Israel. Tell them: When you enter the land which I am going to give you, the land will observe a Sabbath to God. Sow your fields, prune your vineyards, and take in your harvests for six years. But the seventh year the land will take a Sabbath of complete and total rest, a Sabbath to God; you will not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. Don't reap what grows of itself; don't harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land gets a year of complete and total rest. But you can eat from what the land volunteers during the Sabbath year—you and your men and women servants, your hired hands, and the foreigners who live in the country, and, of course, also your livestock and the wild animals in the land can eat from it. Whatever the land volunteers of itself can be eaten.

Count off seven Sabbaths of years—seven times seven years: Seven

Sabbaths of years adds up to forty-nine years. Then sound loud blasts on the ram's horn on the tenth day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement. Sound the ram's horn all over the land. Sanctify the fiftieth year; make it a holy year. Proclaim freedom all over the land to everyone who lives in it—a Jubilee for you: Each person will go back to his family's property and reunite with his extended family. The fiftieth year is your Jubilee year: Don't sow; don't reap what volunteers itself in the fields; don't harvest the untended vines because it's the Jubilee and a holy year for you. You're permitted to eat from whatever volunteers itself in the fields.

If you sell or buy property from one of your countrymen, don't cheat him. Calculate the purchase price on the basis of the number of years since the Jubilee. He is obliged to set the sale price on the basis of the number of harvests remaining until the next Jubilee. The more years left, the more money; you can raise the price. The fewer years left, the less money; decrease the price. What you are buying and selling in fact is the number of crops you're going to harvest. Don't cheat each other. Fear your God. I am God, your God. Keep my decrees and observe my laws and you will live secure in the land. The land will yield its fruit; you will have all you can eat and will live safe and secure. Do I hear you ask, 'What are we going to eat in the seventh year if we don't plant or harvest?' I assure you, I will send such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. While you plant in the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and continue until the

harvest of the ninth year comes in. If one of your brothers becomes indigent and cannot support himself, help him, the same as you would a foreigner or a guest so that he can continue to live in your neighborhood. Don't gouge him with interest charges; out of reverence for your God help your brother to continue to live with you in the neighborhood. Don't take advantage of his plight by running up big interest charges on his loans, and don't give him food for profit. I am your God who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

As Jesus Rested in the Tomb on the Sabbath, So We Are to Rest in His Righteousness: *" Therefore, a time of rest and worship exists for God's people. Those who entered his place of rest also rested from their work as God did from his. So we must make every effort to enter that place of rest." Hebrews 4:8*

LIFE BALANCE

Achieving Balance Through Equilibrium

Hebrews 4 (GW)

Sabbath Rest

God's promise that we may enter his place of rest still stands. We are afraid that some of you think you won't enter his place of rest. We have heard the same Good News that your ancestors heard. But the message didn't help those who heard it in the past because they didn't believe.

We who believe are entering that place of rest. As God said, "So I angrily took a solemn oath that they would never enter my place of rest." God said this even though he had finished his work when he created the world. Somewhere in Scripture God has said this about the seventh day: "On the seventh day God rested from all his work." God also said in the same passage, "They will never enter my place of rest." However, some people enter that place of rest. Those who heard the Good News in the past did not enter God's place of rest because they did not obey God. So God set another day. That day is today. Many

years after your ancestors failed to enter that place of rest. God spoke about it through David in the passage already quoted: "If you hear God speak today, don't be stubborn." If Joshua had given the people rest, God would not have spoken about another day. Therefore, a time of rest and worship exists for God's people. Those who entered his place of rest also rested from their work as God did from his. So we must make every effort to enter that place of rest. Then no one will be lost by following the example of those who refused to obey.

God's word is living and active. It is sharper than any two-edged sword and cuts as deep as the place where soul and spirit meet, the place where joints and marrow meet. God's word judges a person's thoughts and intentions. No creature can hide from God. Everything is uncovered and exposed for him to see. We must answer to him.

We need to hold on to our declaration of faith: We have a superior chief priest who has gone through the heavens. That person is Jesus, the Son of God. We have a chief priest who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. He was tempted in every way that we are, but he didn't sin. So we can go confidently to the throne of God's kindness to receive mercy and find kindness, which will help us at the right time.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

"Nothing in the universe is attained by doing nothing. You must always give up something to get something. It's extremely basic, you can't fill a cup without giving up its contents first. You can't even move to a new place in the room without giving up the space you occupy. In other words, sacrifice is a basic concept of our universe.

Traditional Afro-Cuban Rite

God Has a Place and Destiny for Us: *"I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send to my people? Who will go for me and be my messenger?' With my heart overflowing in gratitude for what the Lord had done for me, I said, "Here am I, Lord. Send me." Isaiah 6:8*

LIFE CALLING

Discovering Your Destiny

Isaiah 6 (CW)

Isaiah's Call to Service

The Lord called me to function as a prophet the same year that King Uzziah died. One day while I was worshiping in the Temple, I had a vision of the heavenly Sanctuary. There I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and His presence filled the place with glory.

Above Him and all around Him stood angels, each with six wings. With two they covered their face, with two they covered their feet and with the other two they hovered in space and flew. The angels were singing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts. The earth is full of His glory." At the sound of their voices the doors and the pillars shook, and the Temple was filled with the smoke of incense.

I cried out, "I'm gone! There's no hope for me! I am a man of unclean lips. I have sinned. My own nature can't be trusted and I live among a sinful people. I am doomed, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel."

Then I saw one of the angels take a burning coal from the altar of incense in the heavenly Sanctuary, fly down to where I was and touch my lips with this live coal. As he did so, he said, "This coal represents God's grace. The Lord wants you to know that your sins are forgiven and your guilt is gone."

Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send to my people? Who will go for me and be my messenger?" With my heart overflowing in gratitude for what the Lord had done for me, I said, "Here am I, Lord. Send me."

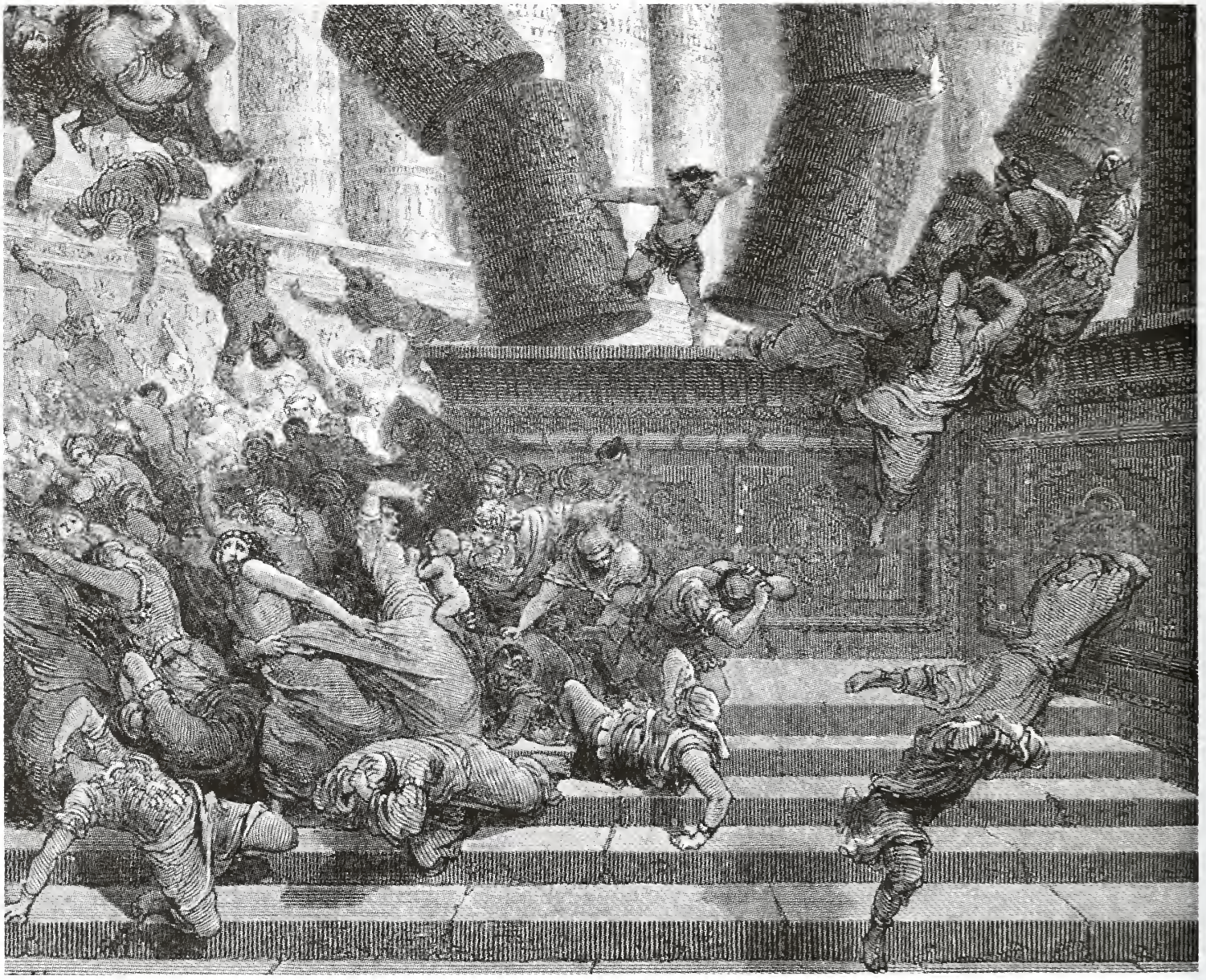
He said, "Then go and give my people this message: No matter how much you listen to me, you do not understand. No matter how much you look, you can't see what's happening to you. Your hearts have become so scarred by sin that you no longer sense what's good, and your ears are so deafened by worldly sounds that you no longer hear what I'm trying to tell you. You don't want to see, to hear or to understand because you don't want to change and be healed."

Then I said, "Lord, how long will things like this go on?" He said to me, "Things won't change until all their cities lie in ruins, until their houses are destroyed and their vineyards are trampled in the dust, until they've been taken captive and carried into a faraway land, to a foreign country, and only a few of them are left. Even though only a tenth of the people stay in the country and start to rebuild the Temple, I will let

their enemies come back, invade the land and burn it down. But as the stump of the oak brings forth new shoots when it's left in the ground, so the time for a new beginning will come to the remnant of my people, for the Holy Seed will be the strength of the remnant of Israel."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



Like David, Samson Cried Out in Desperation to God for Help: *"Lord, without you, what can I really hope for? I've decided to put all my hope in you. Please save me from my own sins, and don't let fools make fun of me. I'll keep quiet and not say another word about myself and my circumstances." Psalm 39:7*

LIFE'S FRAILTY

Remember Life is Fragile

Psalm 39 (CW)

Life's Vulnerability

I made a covenant with myself and said, "I will be careful about what I do and say. I will say nothing that the wicked might use against me."

So I kept quiet and said nothing, not even commenting on anything good, but my anguish only increased. Soon my anguish turned into anger, and my heart grew hot. I thought about the situation and decided to pray. But as I prayed, the fires of revenge increased.

Then I said to the Lord, "Lord, how much longer do I have to live with myself? When will you let me die? Life is so short anyway; it doesn't really matter whether I die now or later. In your sight, a lifetime is nothing, and even at its longest, man's life is like a wind that passes by and is gone. Man's life is no more than a passing shadow on the landscape. He hurries about doing this and that, but it's not long before he passes off the scene of action. He accumulates a lot of wealth and then doesn't even know how those who get it spend it.

Lord, without you, what can I really hope for? I've decided to put all my hope in you. Please save me from my own sins, and don't let fools make fun of me. I'll keep quiet and not say another word about myself and my circumstances. You could have prevented these things from happening to me if you had wanted to, but you didn't. Yet I still put my hope and trust in you. But please don't let this situation continue much longer. It's crushing the life out of me. I've had just about all I can take, and I think I'm about to die. I know you discipline your children because you love them; I also know that you can destroy a man's ego as easily as I can kill a moth. O Lord, hear my prayer. Please listen to my cry. Come and help me! Save me from myself. I'm a stranger and a pilgrim in this land of sin, just as my fathers were.

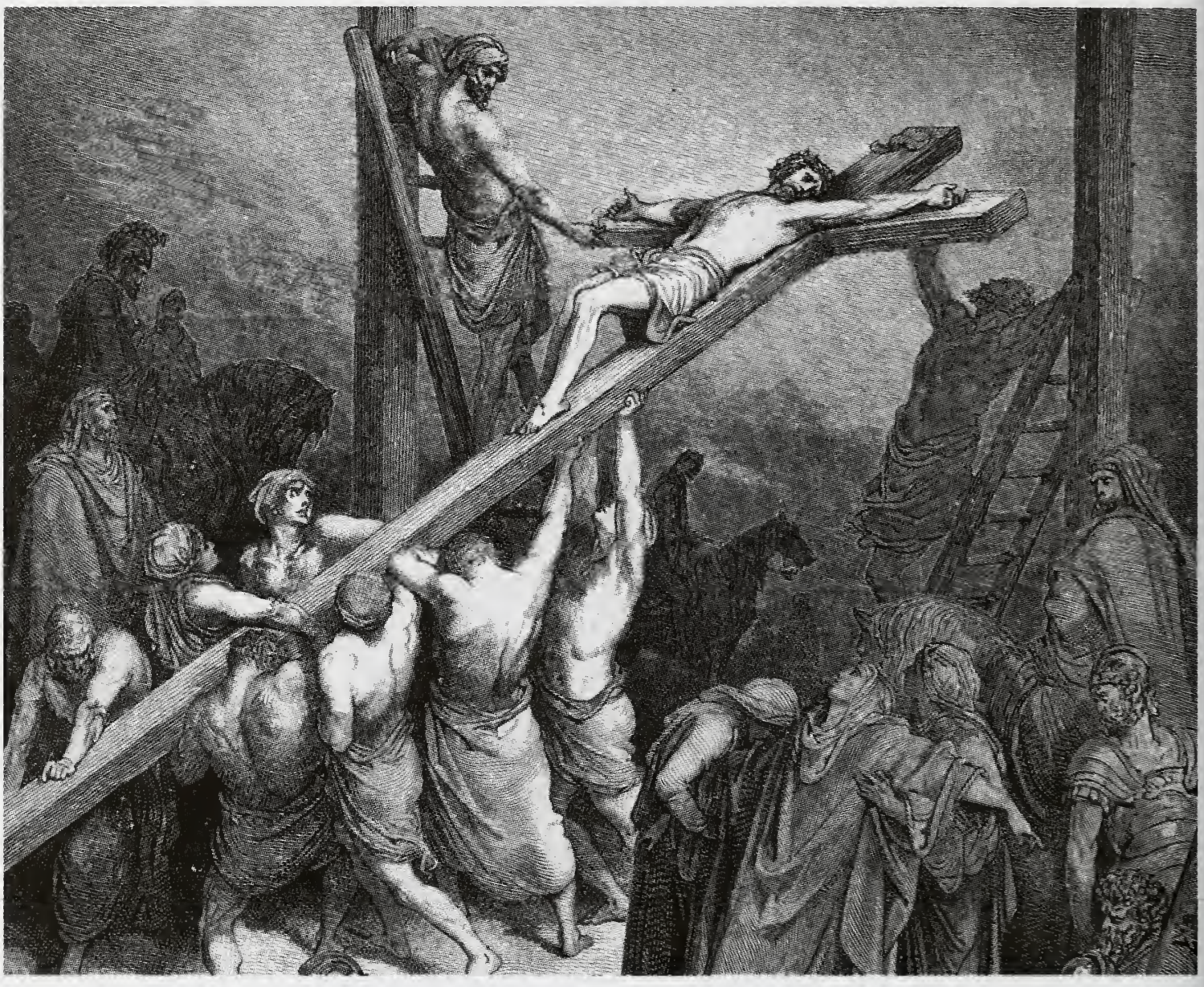
Please look the other way and stop disciplining me so I can be glad again before I die."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Don't keep your eye on temptation while praying not to be led to it.

Unknown



Christ Demonstrated Agape Love When He Died for Us on the Cross: *"But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love." 1 Corinthians 13:13*

LOVE

Go for the Greatest–Get Love!

1 Corinthians 13 (The Msg)

Love Chapter

If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate. If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing. If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.

Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self.

Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, doesn't have a swelled head, doesn't force itself on others, isn't always "me first,"doesn't fly off the handle, doesn't keep score of the sins of others, doesn't revel when others grovel, takes pleasure in the flowering of truth.

Puts up with anything, trusts God always, always looks for the best, never looks back, but keeps going to the end.

Love never dies. Inspired speech will be over some day; praying in tongues will end; understanding will reach its limit. We know only a portion of the truth, and what we say about God is always incomplete. But when the Complete arrives, our incompletes will be canceled. When I was an infant at my mother's breast, I gurgled and cooed like any infant. When I grew up, I left those infant ways for good. We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us!

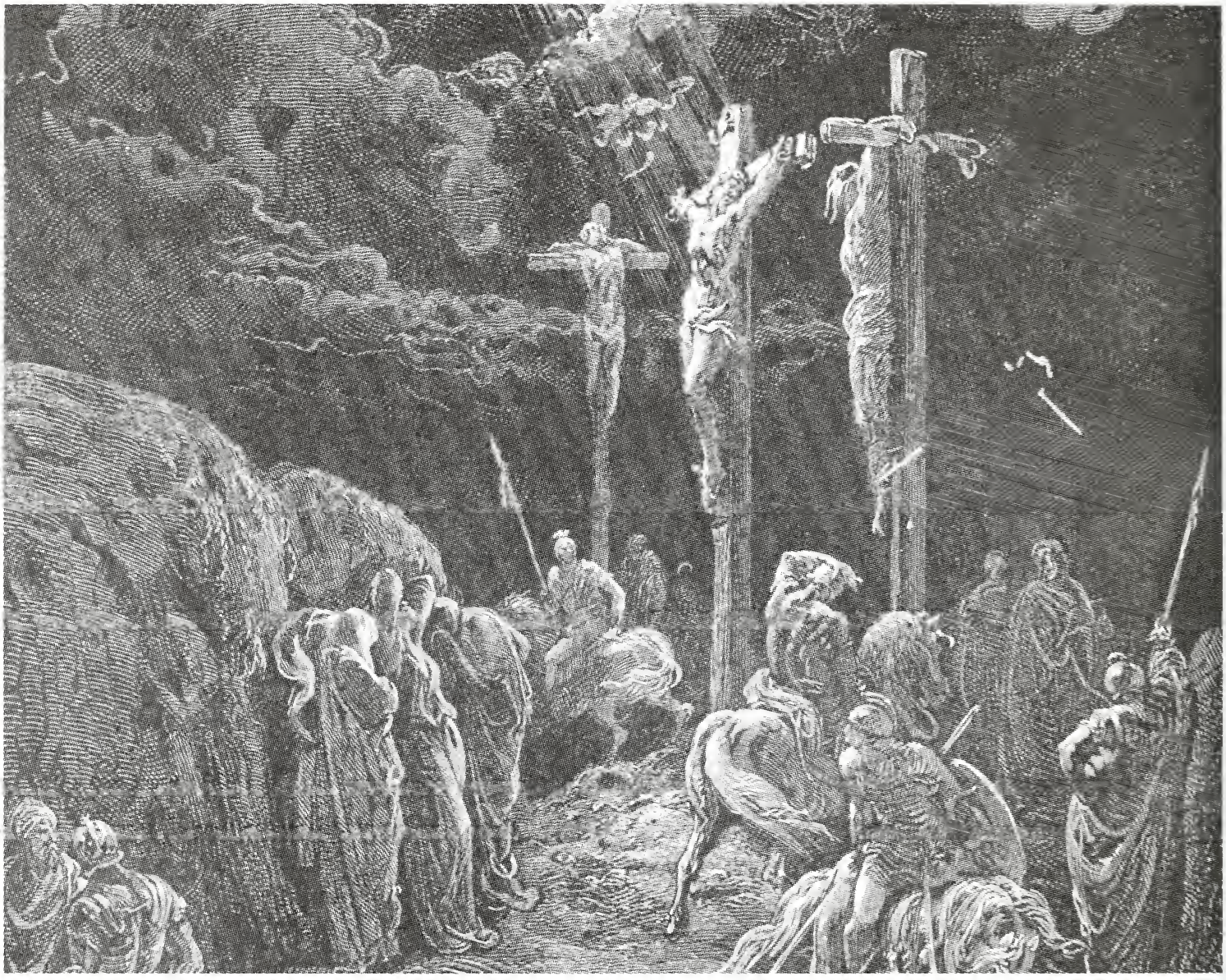
But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Duty make us do things well, but love makes us do them beautifully.

Unknown



God Gave Everything He Had When He Gave Christ: *"God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all." Romans 8:3*

LOVE OF GOD

Anchors That Hold in Tough Times

Romans 8 (The Msg)

Love and Assurance

God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have done that.

The law always ended up being used as a Band-Aid on sin instead of a deep healing of it. And now what the law code asked for but we couldn't deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us.

Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them—living and breathing God! Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the

open, into a spacious, free life. Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God is and what he is doing. And God isn't pleased at being ignored.

But if God himself has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him. Anyone, of course, who has not welcomed this invisible but clearly present God, the Spirit of Christ, won't know what we're talking about. But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells—even though you still experience all the limitations of sin—you yourself experience life on God's terms. It stands to reason, doesn't it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he'll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's! So don't you see that we don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent. There's nothing in it for us, nothing at all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life. God's Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go!

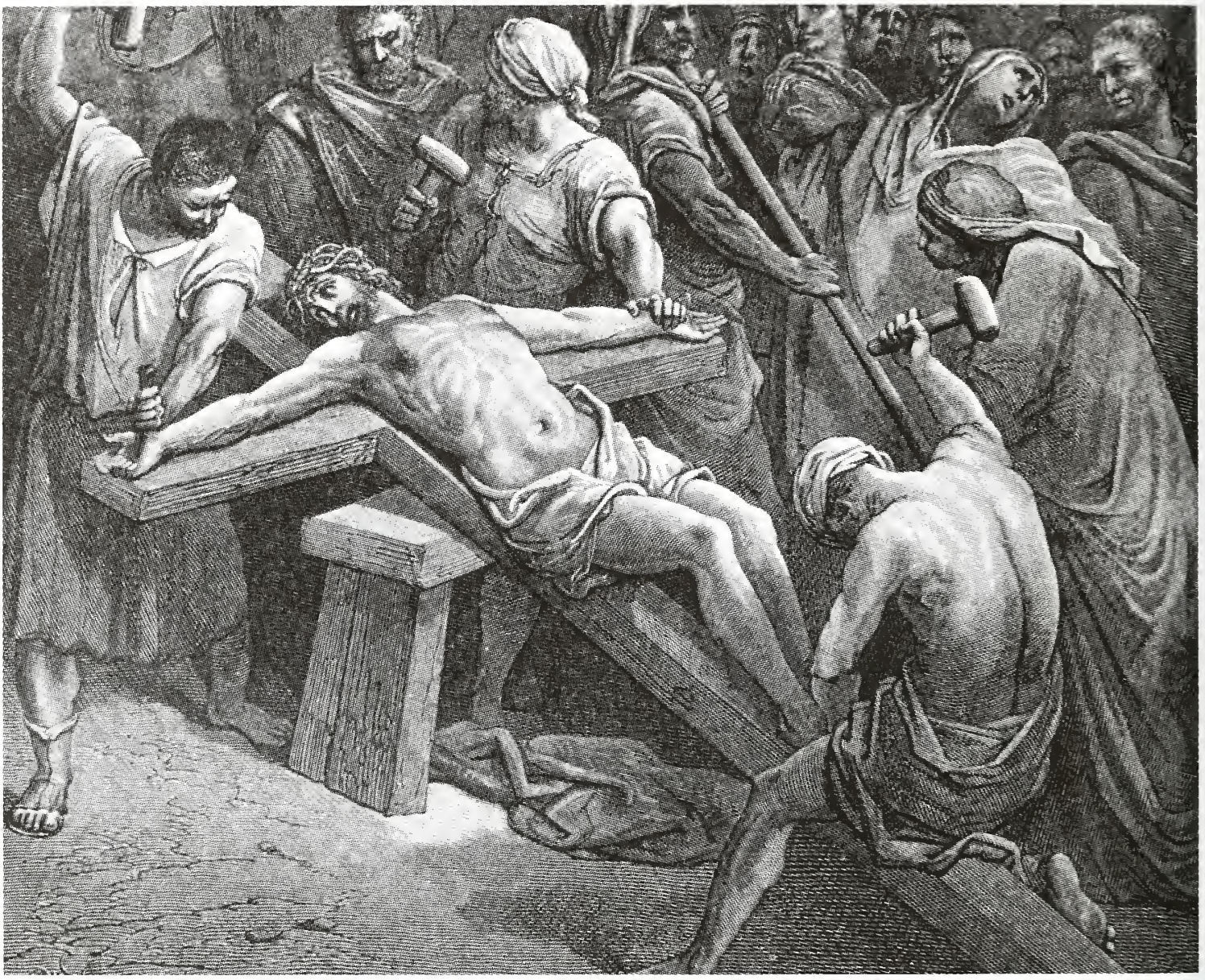
This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?" God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us—an

unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him!

That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



The Sinner Treats God Like the Unfaithful Prostitute Treats Her Husband: *"I told her that I would bring her home and she would live with me. I also told her I would test her to see if she would leave me to play the harlot as she had done before. I would wait to see if she would stay with me before being her husband again." Hosea 3:3*

LOVE'S REDEMPTION

Parable of a Prostitute

Hosea 3 (CW)

Hosea and God's Love

The Lord spoke to me again, saying, "Go and find your wife and tell her that you still love her, even though she has left you and has had many lovers. Show her that you love her just as I love the people of Israel even though they have gone after other gods and enjoy eating the fertility cakes they bake for their idols."

So I went and found my wife working as a prostitute. I paid the man she worked for fifteen pieces of silver and ten bushels of barley and bought her back.

Then I told her that I would bring her home and she would live with me. I also told her I would test her to see if she would leave me to play the harlot as she had done before. I would wait to see if she would stay with me before being her husband again.

In this same way the people of Israel will have to do without a priest or king, without gods and sacred pillars and without fertility idols where they like to go for answers. They will have to rely on me.

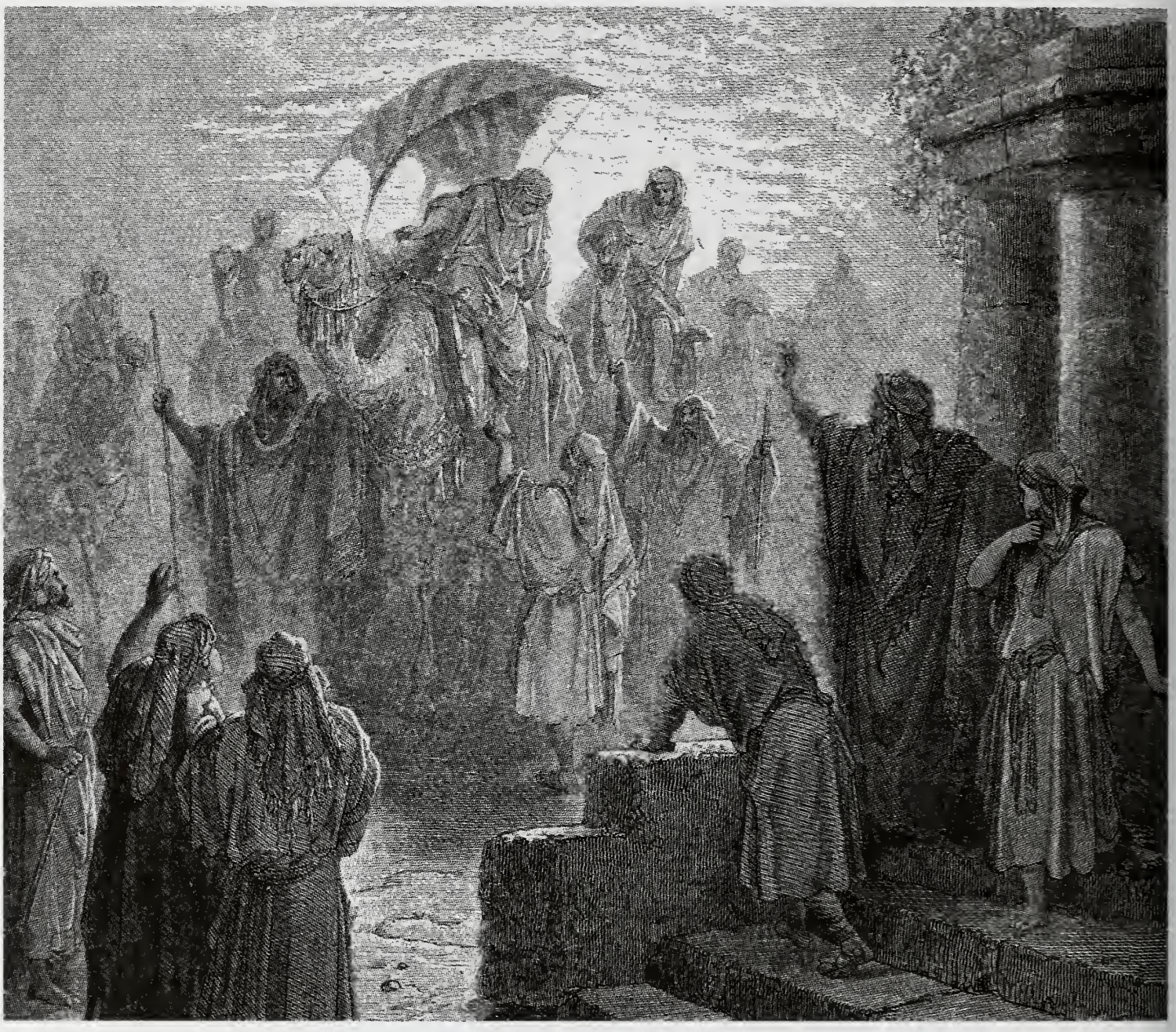
But the time will come when the people of Israel will turn to the Lord with all their hearts. They will turn to the Descendant of David as their rightful King. They will respect the Lord their God and come to Him in awe, seeking His goodness. This is how it will be in the last days.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

When God pardons sin, He purges the record, erases the remembrance, and empowers the recipient.

Unknown



Listen To Your Mother: *"Oh, my son, aren't you the son of my womb? Aren't you the son of my prayers? Listen to what I have to say!" Proverbs 31:2*

MARRIAGE

Profile of Perfection

Proverbs 31 (CW)

Life Principle and the Ideal Wife

Following are words of wisdom which King Lemuel's mother taught him: "Oh, my son, aren't you the son of my womb? Aren't you the son of my prayers? Listen to what I have to say! Don't spend all your time with women or give all your energy to sex. That has ruined many a king.

Listen to me, Lemuel. Kings should not drink or develop a craving for alcohol. When they drink, they forget the law and deprive people of their rights.

Speak up for those who can't speak for themselves and for the rights of those who are destitute. Speak up for people and judge them fairly. Defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Who can find a wife of noble character? She is worth more than the costliest jewels. Her husband has total confidence in her. He has no need of other treasures. All her life she will do him good and will never do anything to harm him.

She supplies her house with wool and linen and does her work eagerly.

She supplies her home with food brought by ships from all over the world. She rises while it is still dark to lay out the day's food and the work to be done by her servant girls. She considers property and buys it; with her own hands she plants a vineyard. She goes about her work with energy and prepares herself well for her tasks. She knows the value of what she sells and often works late into the night. She spins her own thread and makes cloth with her own hands. She gives generously to the poor and helps those who are in need. She doesn't worry about winter because her family has plenty of warm clothes. She makes her own curtains and bedspreads; her clothes are tasteful and beautiful.

Her husband is respected because of her and is chosen to sit with the leaders of her country. She markets beautiful clothes and belts, and sells them to the merchants. She's respected in her own right and is not afraid of the future. She speaks words of gentle wisdom and teaches kindness to others. She is never lazy, and she watches over the affairs of her family. Her children respect her and say so, and her husband praises her, saying,

"Many women do wonderful things, but you surpass them all." Charm is deceptive and beauty disappears, but a woman who honors the Lord will be praised. Give her credit for all she has done. She has earned honor and respect from everyone in the city.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

The formula for a happy marriage? It's the same as the one for living in California; when you find a fault, don't dwell on it.

Jay Trachman

Special Messages for Our Time: *"I saw another angel flying overhead with the everlasting Good News to spread to those who live on earth—to every nation, tribe, language, and people." Revelation 14:6*

MESSAGE FOR TODAY

Txt Messaging for Last Times

Revelation 14 (GW)

Three Angels Messages for Today

I looked, and the lamb was standing on Mount Zion. There were 144,000 people with him who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. Then I heard a sound from heaven like the noise of raging water and the noise of loud thunder. The sound I heard was like the music played by harpists. They were singing a new song in front of the throne, the four living creatures, and the leaders. Only the 144,000 people who had been bought on earth could learn the song.

These 144,000 virgins are pure. They follow the lamb wherever he goes. They were bought from among humanity as the first ones offered to God and to the lamb. They've never told a lie. They are blameless.

I saw another angel flying overhead with the everlasting Good News to spread to those who live on earth—to every nation, tribe, language,

and people. The angel said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the time has come for him to judge. Worship the one who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs."

Another angel, a second one, followed him, and said, "Fallen! Babylon the Great has fallen! She has made all the nations drink the wine of her passionate sexual sins."

Another angel, a third one, followed them, and said in a loud voice, "Whoever worships the beast or its statue, whoever is branded on his forehead or his hand, will drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured unmixed into the cup of God's anger. Then he will be tortured by fiery sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and the lamb. The smoke from their torture will go up forever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast or its statue, or for anyone branded with its name." In this situation God's holy people, who obey his commands and keep their faith in Jesus, need endurance. I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: From now on those who die believing in the Lord are blessed." "Yes," says the Spirit. "Let them rest from their hard work. What they have done goes with them."

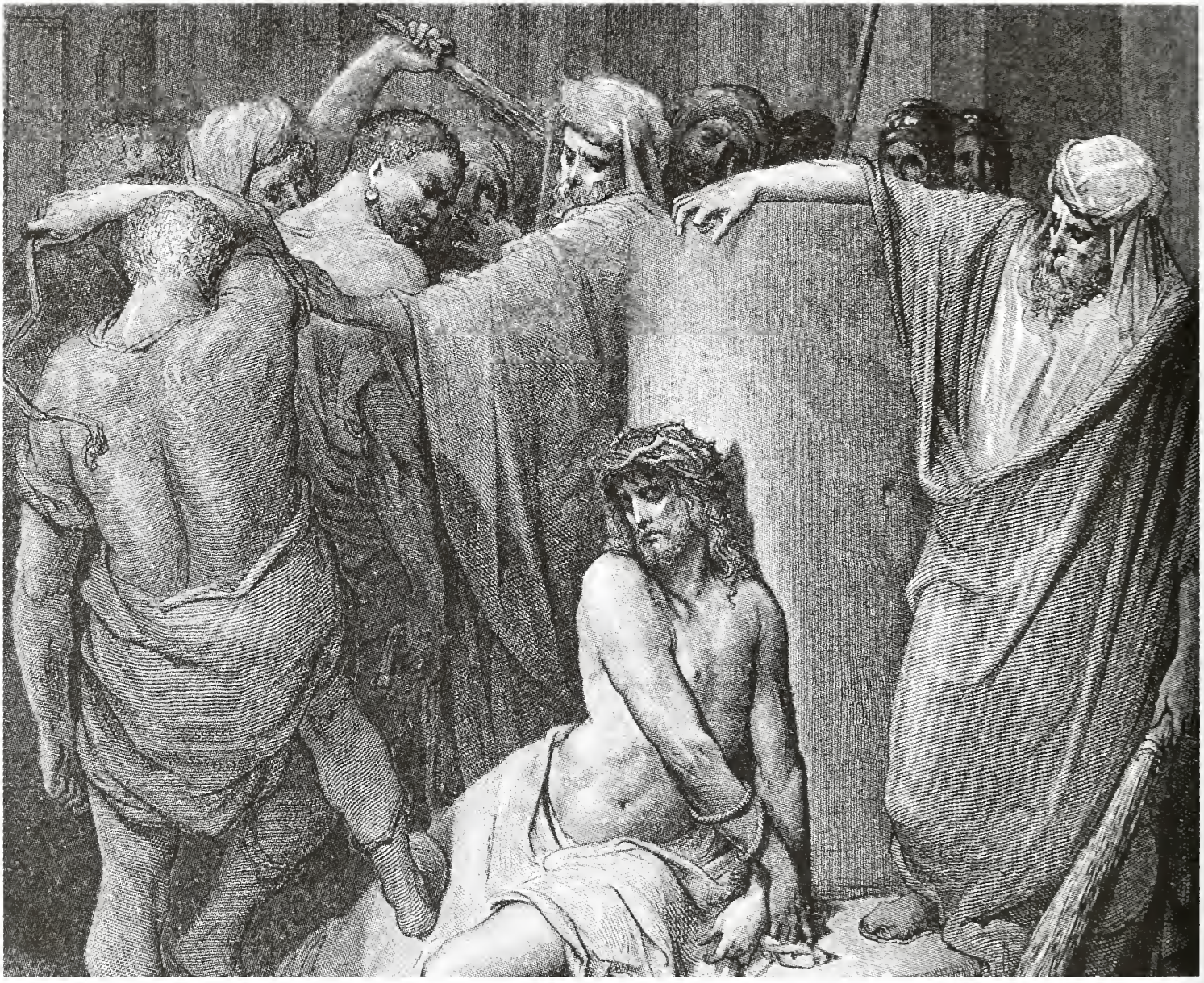
Then I looked, and there was a white cloud, and on the cloud sat someone who was like the Son of Man. He had a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Another angel came out of the temple. He cried out in a loud voice to the one who sat on the cloud, "Swing your sickle, and gather the harvest. The time has come to gather it, because the harvest on the earth is overripe." The one who sat on

the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the harvesting of the earth was completed.

Another angel came out of the temple in heaven. He, too, had a sharp sickle. Yet another angel came from the altar with authority over fire. This angel called out in a loud voice to the angel with the sharp sickle, "Swing your sickle, and gather the bunches of grapes from the vine of the earth, because those grapes are ripe." The angel swung his sickle on the earth and gathered the grapes from the vine of the earth. He threw them into the winepress of God's anger. The grapes were trampled in the winepress outside the city. Blood flowed out of the winepress as high as a horse's bridle for 1,600 stadia.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



Jesus Suffered in Our Place: *"He willingly bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we thought He was smitten by God, afflicted and rejected by the God of Israel. He was pierced for our sins; He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was placed on Him, and by His wounds we are healed." Isaiah 53:4*

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

Who, What and Why of the Suffering Servant

Isaiah 53 (CW)

Messiah Prophecies

Who has believed our message? Who has seen the Lord's hand in all this?

It was the will of God that His Servant grow up like a tender plant rooted in dry ground. He had no outward beauty or majesty to attract us to Him. There was nothing in His appearance to make us admire Him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. We turned our backs on Him and ignored Him as if He had no value. He was despised, and we took no pity on Him.

He willingly bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we thought He was smitten by God, afflicted and rejected by the God of Israel. He was pierced for our sins; He was crushed for our iniquities; the pun-

ishment that brought us peace was placed on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.

All of us like sheep have gone astray. We have each gone our own way. Yet the Lord laid on Him all of our iniquities. He was oppressed and afflicted. He was mistreated and falsely accused, yet He bore it all without saying a thing. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep stands silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.

He was unjustly arrested, judged and led away to die. Who from His generation knew that He died for them? Yet He was nailed to the wood for the sins of all who deserved to die. He was buried without honor as if He were a sinner. A rich man donated a grave for him. He had done nothing violent, neither had He ever deceived anyone.

It was the will of the Lord for Him to die. And though God made Him to be an offering for our sins, He will rise again and see the fruit of His suffering. He will live forever, and through Him God's plan for us will be fulfilled.

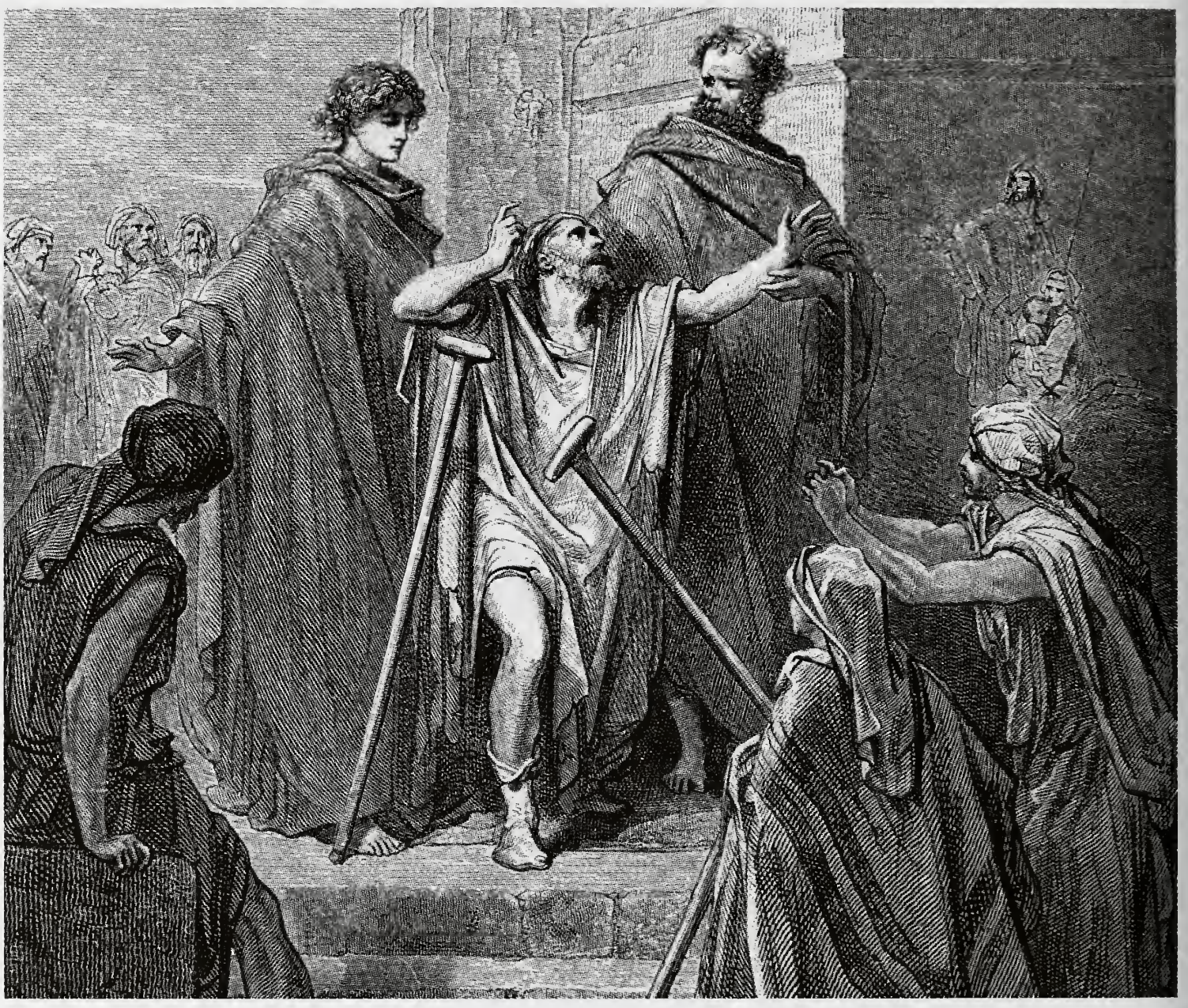
After a life of suffering, He will once again have fullness of joy. He will know that what He did was not in vain. He will see the fruit of His labors and be satisfied. By the knowledge of Him, many will be justified, for He bore the iniquities of them all.

The Lord says, "I will honor Him and give Him a place among the powerful and great, yet He will be above them all. He has willingly

given His life for His people and shared the destiny of sinners. He has suffered what was their due and intercedes for them in the Sanctuary above."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



Our Mission is to Rich and Poor, and All the World: *"Someday your kingdom will reach from sea to sea, from the Euphrates river westward until it covers the entire earth. All the people of the earth will come and bow down before you." Psalm 72:8*

MISSIONS

Destiny is Linked with Serving Others

Psalm 72 (CW)

God to the Nations

I composed this prayer for my son Solomon, the new king of Israel, to use: Endow me, O Lord, with a sense of justice. Teach your royal son how to decide righteously. Then I can rule your people and govern both rich and poor. The mountains will be filled with peace and the valleys, with righteousness. May I judge the poor fairly; may I be ready to help the needy and stop the oppressor.

May your righteousness and your love endure as the sun and the moon throughout all generations. Your presence is like a gentle rain on a newly mown field of hay, like showers watering a thirsty land. The righteous will flourish in your presence and peace will abound throughout the land.

Someday your kingdom will reach from sea to sea, from the Euphrates river westward until it covers the entire earth. All the people of the earth will come and bow down before you. Even your enemies will come and acknowledge your righteousness. The kings of Tarshish

and the kings from the islands of the sea will bring you gifts. The kings of Arabia and Ethiopia will bring their offerings to you. All kings will come and bow down before you; people from all nations will serve you.

You will deliver the needy because they cry for help, and you will heal the sick because they have no one to help them. You will change the status of the poor and stop the work of the oppressor. You will put an end to violence, and there will be no more shedding of blood. Long live the King! May gold from the land of Sheba be laid at His feet. May people bless Him forever. There will be plenty of grain in the land; hills will be covered with crops, and cities will be full of lovely people.

The King's name will ever be on your lips. His fame will cover the earth like the rays of the sun. He will bless all nations and they, in turn, will call Him blessed.

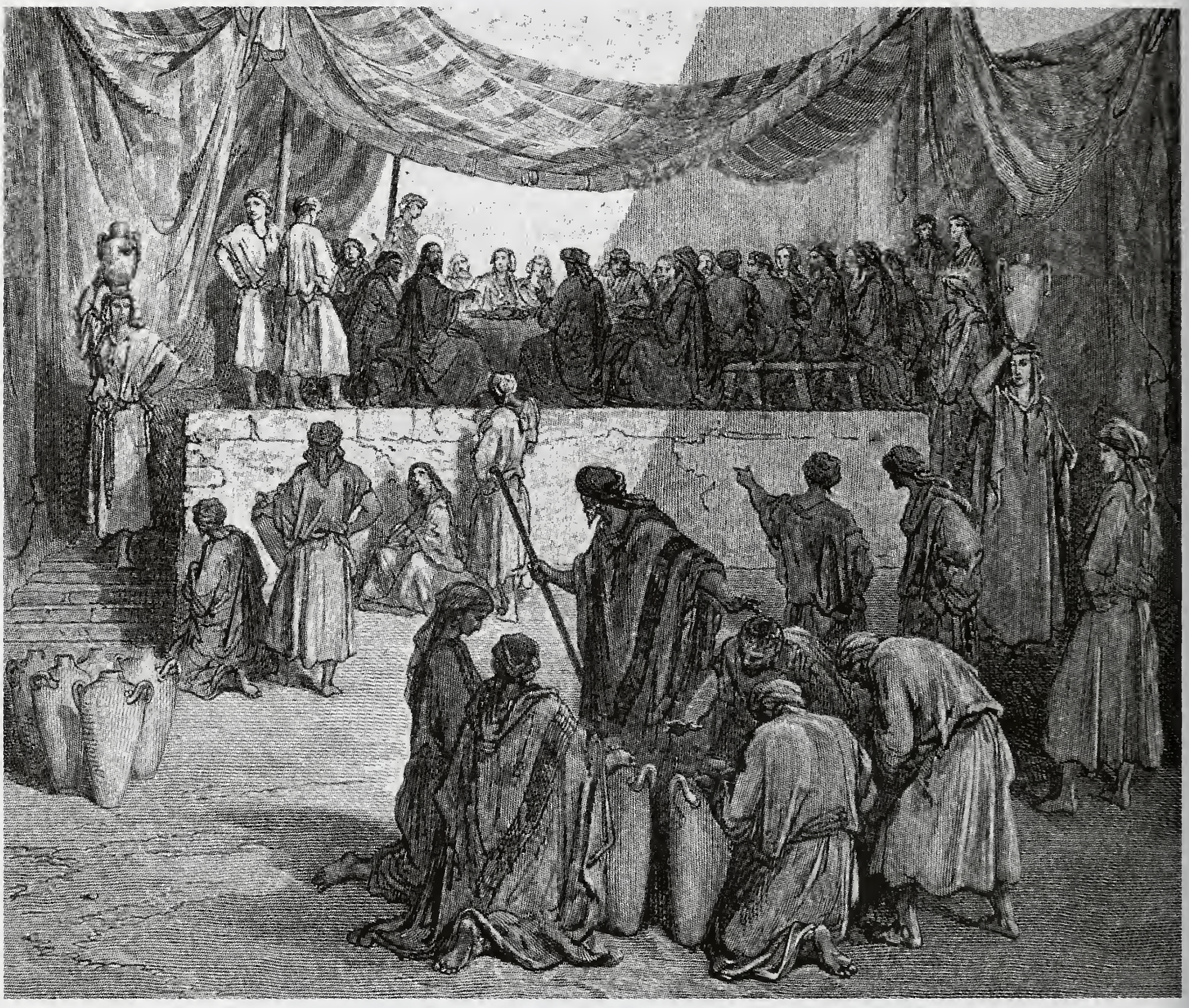
Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, the only One who can accomplish all this. Blessed be His glorious name. May the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and amen. This ends the prayer composed by David, son of Jesse.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Love does not begin and end the way we seem to think it does. Love is a battle; love is a war; love is growing up.

James Baldwin



Jesus is the Vine–Vitality: *"Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me." John 15:4*

NOURISHMENT

Secrets of the Vine Are a Source of Power

John 15 (The Msg)

Jesus as the Vine

"I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn't bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken. "Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me. "I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father

shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples.

"I've loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you'll remain intimately at home in my love. That's what I've done—kept my Father's commands and made myself at home in his love.

"I've told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature. This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. You are my friends when you do the things I command you. I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father.

"You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won't spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you.

"But remember the root command: Love one another.

"If you find the godless world is hating you, remember it got its start hating me. If you lived on the world's terms, the world would love you as one of its own. But since I picked you to live on God's terms and no longer on the world's terms, the world is going to hate you.

"When that happens, remember this: Servants don't get better treatment than their masters. If they beat on me, they will certainly beat on

you. If they did what I told them, they will do what you tell them.

"They are going to do all these things to you because of the way they treated me, because they don't know the One who sent me. If I hadn't come and told them all this in plain language, it wouldn't be so bad. As it is, they have no excuse. Hate me, hate my Father—it's all the same. If I hadn't done what I have done among them, works no one has ever done, they wouldn't be to blame. But they saw the God-signs and hated anyway, both me and my Father. Interesting—they have verified the truth of their own Scriptures where it is written, 'They hated me for no good reason.'

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Saul's Death was the Result of Poor Choices: *Then all Israel assembled before David at Hebron. "Look at us," they said. "We're your very flesh and blood. In the past, yes, even while Saul was king, you were the real leader of Israel. God told you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel; you are to be the ruler of my people Israel.'"* *1 Chronicles 11:1*

OUTCOMES

Two Leaders, Different Paths

1 Chronicles 10-11 (NIV)

Kingly Transition from Saul to David

So Saul and his three sons—all four the same day—died. When all the Israelites in the valley saw that the army had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their cities and ran off; the Philistines came and moved in.

The next day the Philistines came to plunder the dead bodies and found Saul and his sons dead on Mount Gilboa. They stripped Saul, removed his head and his armor, and put them on exhibit throughout Philistia, reporting the victory news to their idols and the people. Then they put Saul's armor on display in the temple of their gods and placed his skull as a trophy in the temple of their god Dagon.

The people of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul. All of their fighting men went into action—retrieved the bodies of Saul and his sons and brought them to Jabesh, gave them a digni-

fied burial under the oak at Jabesh, and mourned their deaths for seven days. Saul died in disobedience, disobedient to God. He didn't obey God's words. Instead of praying, he went to a witch to seek guidance. Because he didn't go to God for help, God took his life and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse.

Then all Israel assembled before David at Hebron. "Look at us," they said. "We're your very flesh and blood. In the past, yes, even while Saul was king, you were the real leader of Israel. God told you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel; you are to be the ruler of my people Israel.' "When all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, David made a covenant with them in the presence of God at Hebron. Then they anointed David king over Israel exactly as God had commanded through Samuel. David and all Israel went to Jerusalem (it was the old Jebus, where the Jebusites lived). The citizens of Jebus told David, "No trespassing—you can't come here." David came on anyway and captured the fortress of Zion, the City of David.

David's stride became longer, his embrace larger—yes, God—of—the—Angel Armies was with him!

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Today's mighty oak is just yesterday's little acorn that held its ground.

Unknown

Jesus Taught His Disciples to Be Fishers of Men: *"What a huge harvest! And how few the harvest hands. So on your knees; ask the God of the Harvest to send harvest hands. On your way! But be careful—this is hazardous work. You're like lambs in a wolf pack." Luke 10:12*

OUTREACH STRATEGIES

Guidelines for Service Providers

Luke 10 (The Msg)

Jesus' Instruction to Workers

Later the Master selected seventy and sent them ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he intended to go. He gave them this charge: "What a huge harvest! And how few the harvest hands. So on your knees; ask the God of the Harvest to send harvest hands.

"On your way! But be careful—this is hazardous work. You're like lambs in a wolf pack. "Travel light. Comb and toothbrush and no extra luggage. "Don't loiter and make small talk with everyone you meet along the way. "When you enter a home, greet the family, 'Peace.' If your greeting is received, then it's a good place to stay. But if it's not received, take it back and get out. Don't impose yourself.

"When you enter a town and are not received, go out in the street and say, 'The only thing we got from you is the dirt on our feet, and

we're giving it back. Did you have any idea that God's kingdom was right on your doorstep?' Sodom will have it better on Judgment Day than the town that rejects you.

"The one who listens to you, listens to me. The one who rejects you, rejects me. And rejecting me is the same as rejecting God, who sent me."

The seventy came back triumphant. "Master, even the demons danced to your tune!" Jesus said, "I know. I saw Satan fall, a bolt of lightning out of the sky. See what I've given you? Safe passage as you walk on snakes and scorpions, and protection from every assault of the Enemy. No one can put a hand on you. All the same, the great triumph is not in your authority over evil, but in God's authority over you and presence with you. Not what you do for God but what God does for you—that's the agenda for rejoicing."

Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. "Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?" He answered, "What's written in God's Law? How do you interpret it?" He said, "That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbor as well as you do yourself."

"Good answer!" said Jesus. "Do it and you'll live." Looking for a loophole, he asked, "And just how would you define 'neighbor'?"

Jesus answered by telling a story. "There was once a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers.

They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead. Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across to the other side. Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man.

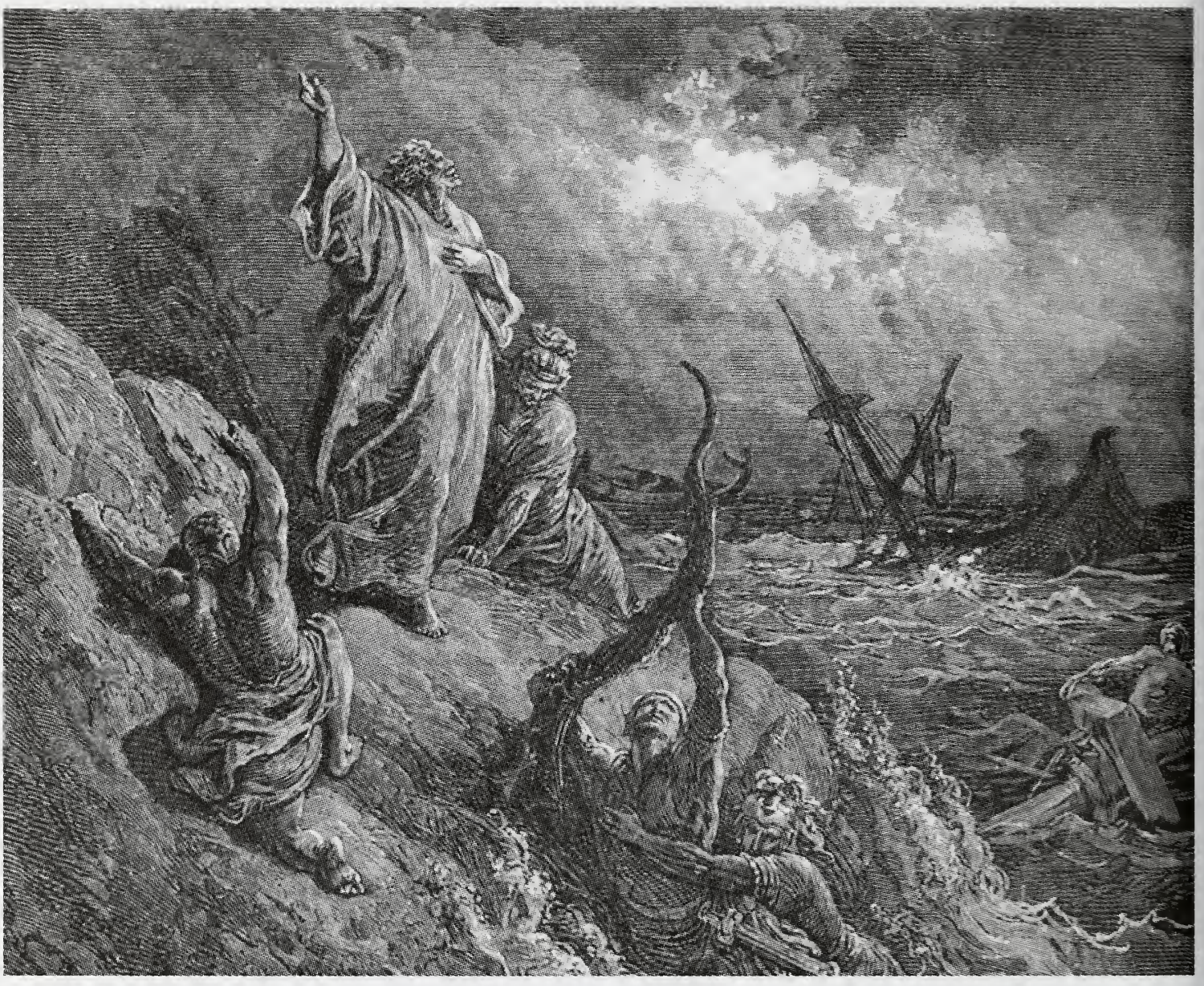
"A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man's condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I'll pay you on my way back.'

"What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers? The one who treated him kindly," the religion scholar responded.

Jesus said, "Go and do the same."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



In Spite of the Tragedies of Life Everlasting Life Will Be Worth It: *"The Lamb who is before the throne will be their Shepherd and will feed them. He will lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God Himself will wipe away all tears from their eyes." Revelation 7:17*

OVERCOMING

Outcomes of the Overcomers

Revelation 7 (CW)

The Redeemed

After this, one of the twenty-four elders came and asked me, "Do you know who these people are whom you see dressed in white with victory palms in their hands? Do you know where they came from?"

I answered, "Sir, I'm sure you know, but I don't." He said to me, "These are people who have come out of great tribulation and have successfully withstood the test of the last days, remaining loyal to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. They have washed their filthy garments and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They are dressed in the righteousness of Christ and hold victory palms in their hands.

They will stand in the presence of God, because they're God's people. They will worship Him and serve Him continuously for He is their Temple, and He will be with them and will fill their hearts with joy.

Never again will they go hungry or be thirsty, scorched by the sun or persecuted.

The Lamb who is before the throne will be their Shepherd and will feed them. He will lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God Himself will wipe away all tears from their eyes. All these things took place during the sixth and final part of the history of the giving of the gospel.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. God had recreated it, just as He had made it in the beginning. The old earth with its polluted atmosphere was gone and so were the huge oceans.

I, John, saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, come down out of heaven from God, like a beautifully dressed bride ready to meet her husband. I heard a loud voice coming from the throne, saying, "God will now make His home on earth. He will personally live with His people and be with them. They will be part of the royal family of heaven and God will truly be their God. He will wipe away all their tears and there will be no more death, neither will there be any more sorrow, crying or pain. The old order of things is now forever gone."

Then the One who sat on the throne said, "Look, I have made everything new!" Then He said to me, "Write down everything you saw, because it's true." He said, "It's done! Evil is gone! I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Those who are thirsty will drink without cost from the springs of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all things, for I am his Father and he is

my son. But those who were ashamed of me, who didn't believe what I said, who continued lying, cheating, killing, committing adultery, playing with demons and worshiping idols they made for themselves have had to suffer the consequences of their sins. They were consumed by flames from the lake of fire, which was the second death."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

God Judges Arrogance in Nations and People: *"Your arrogance has deceived you. You live on rocky cliffs. You make your home up high. You say to yourself, 'No one can bring me down to earth.' Even though you fly high like an eagle and build your nest among the stars." Obadiah 1:3*

PAYBACK

What Goes Around Comes Around

Obadiah 1 (GW)

Obadiah's Prophecies

This is the vision of Obadiah. This is what the Almighty Lord says about Edom: We have heard a message from the Lord. A messenger was sent among the nations to say, "Get ready! Let's go to war against Edom."

"Edom, I will make you the smallest of nations. Others will despise you. Your arrogance has deceived you. You live on rocky cliffs. You make your home up high. You say to yourself, No one can bring me down to earth.' Even though you fly high like an eagle and build your nest among the stars, I will bring you down from there," declares the Lord. "If thieves or looters come to you during the night, won't they steal only until they've had enough? You will be ruined! If people come to pick your grapes, won't they leave a few grapes behind?

But you, Esau, will lose everything. Even your hidden treasures will be looted. All your allies will force you to leave your land. The people who are at peace with you will deceive you. Those who eat food with

you will set traps for you, and you won't even know about it. "On that day I will destroy the wise people in Edom and take wisdom away from Esau's mountain," declares the Lord. "Teman, your warriors will be terrified. Everyone on Esau's mountain will be slaughtered.

"Because of the violence you did to Jacob, your relative, you will be covered with shame. You will be destroyed forever. While you stood there doing nothing, strangers carried off Jacob's wealth. Foreigners entered his gates and threw dice for Jerusalem. You acted like one of them.

Don't gloat over your relative's misfortune or be happy when the people of Judah are destroyed. Don't brag so much when they're in distress. Don't march through the gates of my people when disaster strikes or gloat over their misery when disaster strikes. Don't take their wealth when disaster strikes. Don't stand at the crossroads to kill their refugees. Don't hand over their survivors when they're in distress.

"The day of the Lord is near for all nations. Edom, you will be treated as you have treated others. You will get back what you have given. As you, Israel, drank on my holy mountain, so all nations will drink in turn. They will drink and guzzle down everything in it. They will be like those who have never existed. "But refugees will live on Mount Zion. It will be holy. The descendants of Jacob will get back their possessions. The descendants of Jacob will be like a fire. The descendants of Joseph will be like a flame. But the descendants of Esau will be like

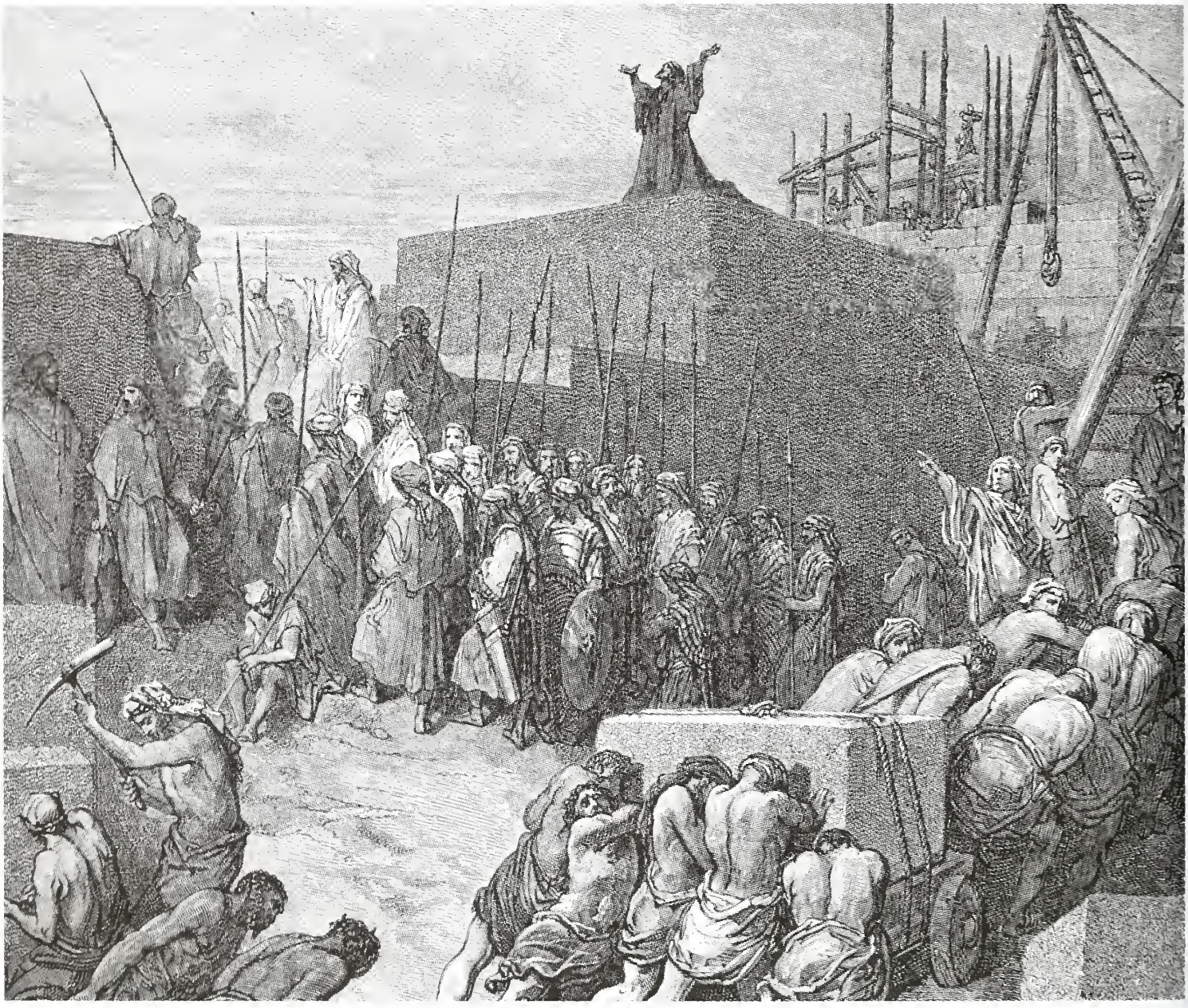
straw. They will be burned and destroyed. There will be no one left among the descendants of Esau. The Lord has spoken.

"People from the Negev will take possession of Esau's mountain. People from the foothills will take possession of Philistia. They will take possession of the lands of Ephraim and Samaria, and {the descendants of} Benjamin will take possession of Gilead Exiles from Israel will take possession of Canaan. They will possess land as far as Zarephath. Exiles from Jerusalem who are in Sepharad will take possession of the cities in the Negev.

Those who are victorious will come from Mount Zion to rule Esau's mountain. The kingdom will belong to the Lord."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



Building Can Be a Challenging Task: *"We kept at it, repairing and rebuilding the wall. The whole wall was soon joined together and halfway to its intended height because the people had a heart for the work." Nehemiah 4:6*

PERSEVERANCE

How to Accomplish Difficult Tasks

Nehemiah 4 (The Msg)

Nehemiah and Wall Building

When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall he exploded in anger, vilifying the Jews. In the company of his Samaritan cronies and military he let loose: "What are these miserable Jews doing? Do they think they can get everything back to normal overnight? Make building stones out of make-believe?" At his side, Tobiah the Ammonite jumped in and said, "That's right! What do they think they're building? Why, if a fox climbed that wall, it would fall to pieces under his weight."

Nehemiah prayed, "Oh listen to us, dear God. We're so despised: Boomerang their ridicule on their heads; have their enemies cart them off as war trophies to a land of no return; don't forgive their iniquity, don't wipe away their sin—they've insulted the builders!" We kept at it, repairing and rebuilding the wall. The whole wall was soon joined together and halfway to its intended height because the people had a heart for the work.

When Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the repairs of the walls of Jerusalem were going so well—that the breaks in the wall were being fixed—they were absolutely furious. They put their heads together and decided to fight against Jerusalem and create as much trouble as they could. We countered with prayer to our God and set a round-the-clock guard against them.

But soon word was going around in Judah, The builders are pooped, the rubbish piles up; we're in over our heads, we can't build this wall. And all this time our enemies were saying, "They won't know what hit them. Before they know it we'll be at their throats, killing them right and left. That will put a stop to the work!" The Jews who were their neighbors kept reporting, "They have us surrounded; they're going to attack!" If we heard it once, we heard it ten times.

So I stationed armed guards at the most vulnerable places of the wall and assigned people by families with their swords, lances, and bows. After looking things over I stood up and spoke to the nobles, officials, and everyone else: "Don't be afraid of them. Put your minds on the Master, great and awesome, and then fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes."

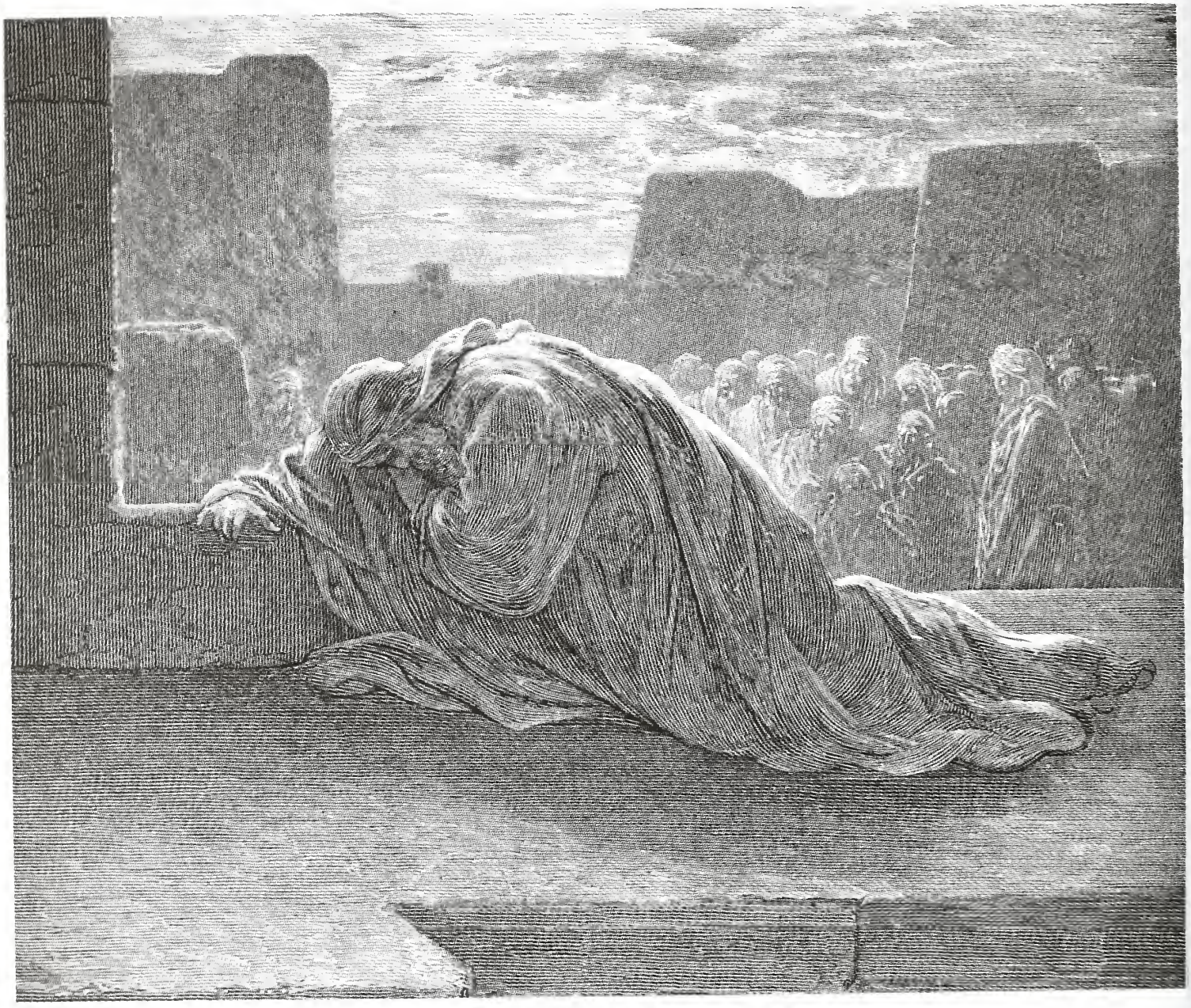
Our enemies learned that we knew all about their plan and that God had frustrated it. And we went back to the wall and went to work. From then on half of my young men worked while the other half stood guard with lances, shields, bows, and mail armor. Military officers

served as backup for everyone in Judah who was at work rebuilding the wall. The common laborers held a tool in one hand and a spear in the other. Each of the builders had a sword strapped to his side as he worked. I kept the trumpeter at my side to sound the alert.

Then I spoke to the nobles and officials and everyone else: "There's a lot of work going on and we are spread out all along the wall, separated from each other. When you hear the trumpet call, join us there; our God will fight for us." And so we kept working, from first light until the stars came out, half of us holding lances. We all slept in our clothes—I, my brothers, my workmen, and the guards backing me up. And each one kept his spear in his hand, even when getting water.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



Daniel Remained True to God: *"When he heard that the document had been signed, he went home to his upstairs room, opened the windows facing Jerusalem and, as his custom was, knelt down to pray and praise his God as he had always done." Daniel 6:10*

PIETY

Living a God-Centered Life Habitually

Daniel 6 (CW)

Daniel and the Lion's Den

Daniel knew the motive of these men in getting Darius to sign the decree. He had always prayed three times a day and everyone knew it. When he heard that the document had been signed, he went home to his upstairs room, opened the windows facing Jerusalem and, as his custom was, knelt down to pray and praise his God as he had always done. Daniel's enemies watched him so they could testify that they had personally seen him praying, taking his petitions to his God, which was now against the law.

Then they went to the king and said, "Your Majesty, didn't you sign a decree that for thirty days no one should take their petitions to any god or man except you? Wasn't the purpose of this decree to test people's loyalty to you and to the empire, and if they broke the law they should be thrown to the lions?" The king said, "Yes, I did, and according to the tradition of the Medes and Persians, once a decree is signed, it cannot be changed. Why do you ask?"

Then Daniel's enemies spoke up and said to the king. "Your Majesty, the man Daniel, he pays no attention to your decree and prays to his God three times a day. To make it worse, he does it before an open window where people can see him? This is nothing but open defiance of you, Your Majesty."

When the king heard this he was terribly upset with what had happened, for now he saw that the whole thing was a plot to get Daniel out of the way to keep him from being put in charge of the whole kingdom. The rest of the day the king tried to find a way to get around the law, but couldn't.

At sunset Daniel's enemies came to the king and reminded him, "Your Majesty knows that the law of the Medes and Persians can't be changed and that a decree signed by the king must be carried out."

Reluctantly the king ordered his guards to arrest Daniel and bring him to the palace.When Daniel came in, the king spoke to him with a heavy heart and said, "I have no choice but to have you thrown into the den of lions. But, I believe that the God whom you so faithfully serve will watch over you and keep you from harm."

So at sunset they lowered Daniel into the lions' den, rolled a stone over the mouth of it and covered it with plaster. The king pressed his seal into it and his officials did likewise, so that no one would dare break the seal, either to rescue Daniel or to kill him in case the lions didn't.

Then the king went to his palace and spent the night worrying

about Daniel. He refused all refreshment and entertainment offered to help him sleep. Early the next morning, at the first sign of dawn the king got dressed and hurried to the lions' den to see Daniel because he wondered if Daniel's God had been able to protect him. When he got there he called out anxiously, "Daniel, servant of the Most High God, was your God able to save you?"

From the den came Daniel's voice, "Your Majesty, live forever! My God has sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths so that not one of them has hurt me. My God did this because He knows that I am innocent and that I am loyal to you."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Jesus the Lamb of God Has Earned the Right to Be Praised for Eternity: *"Hallelujah! The Lord our God, the Almighty, has become king. Let us rejoice, be happy, and give him glory because it's time for the marriage of the lamb." Revelation 19:6*

PRAISE

Praise Now in Preparation for Eternity

Revelation 19 (GW)

Hallelujahs in Eternity

After these things I heard what sounded like the loud noise from a large crowd in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation, glory, and power belong to our God. His judgments are true and fair. He has condemned the notorious prostitute who corrupted the world with her sexual sins. He has taken revenge on her for the blood of his servants."

A second time they said, "Hallelujah! The smoke goes up from her forever and ever." The 24 leaders and the 4 living creatures bowed and worshiped God, who was sitting on the throne. They said, "Amen! Hallelujah!" A voice came from the throne. It said, "Praise our God, all who serve and fear him, no matter who you are." I heard what sounded like the noise from a large crowd, like the noise of raging waters, like the noise of loud thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! The Lord our God, the

Almighty, has become king. Let us rejoice, be happy, and give him glory because it's time for the marriage of the lamb. His bride has made herself ready. She has been given the privilege of wearing dazzling, pure linen." This fine linen represents the things that God's holy people do that have his approval.

Then the angel said to me, "Write this: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the lamb's wedding banquet.'" He also told me, "These are the true words of God." I bowed at his feet to worship him. But he told me, "Don't do that! I am your coworker and a coworker of the Christians who hold on to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God, because the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy!"

I saw heaven standing open. There was a white horse, and its rider is named Faithful and True. With integrity he judges and wages war. His eyes are flames of fire. On his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him, but only he knows what it is. He wears clothes dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.

The armies of heaven, wearing pure, white linen, follow him on white horses. A sharp sword comes out of his mouth to defeat the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter and tread the winepress of the fierce anger of God Almighty. On his clothes and his thigh he has a name written: King of kings and Lord of lords.

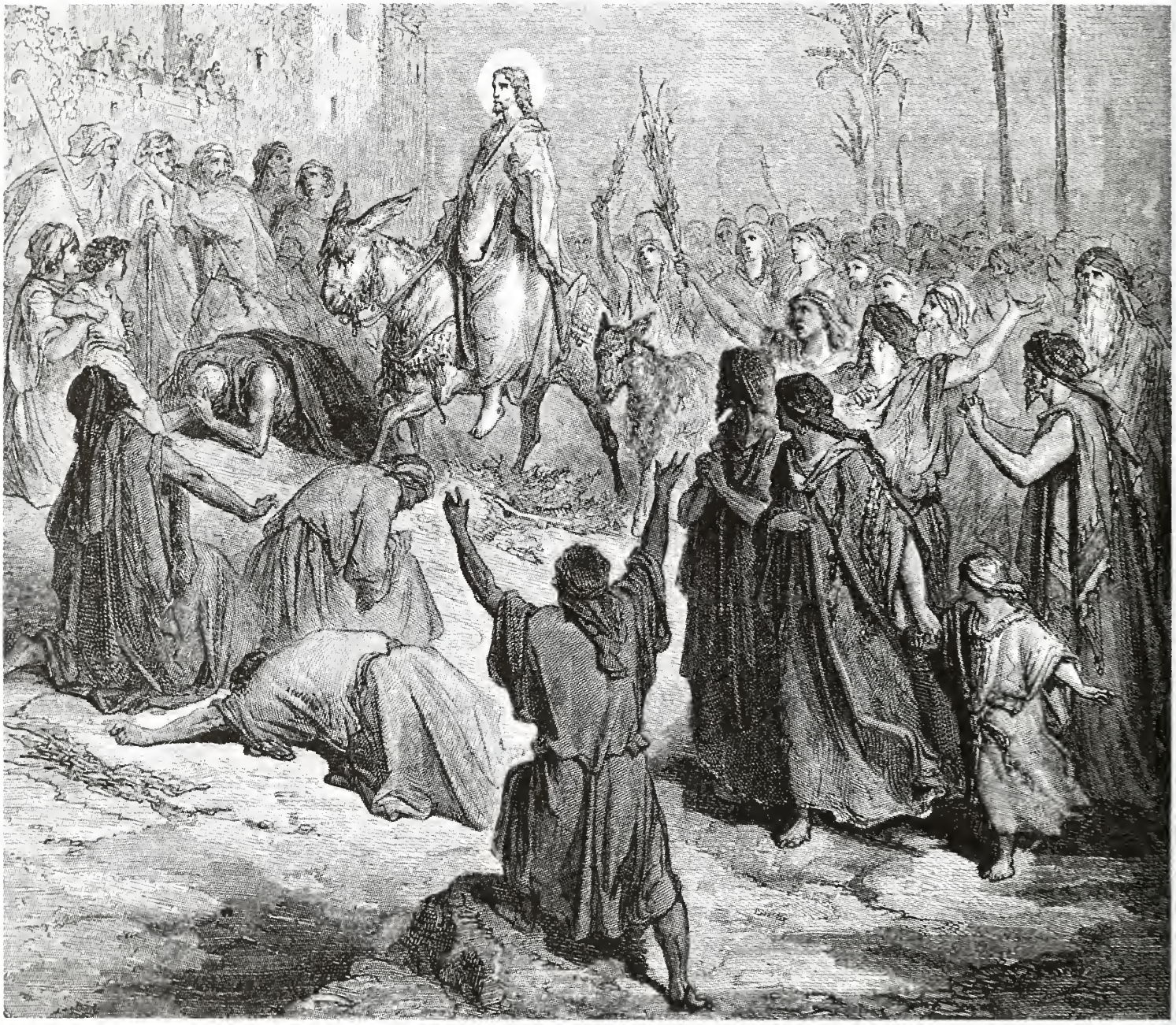
I saw an angel standing in the sun. He cried out in a loud voice to all the birds flying overhead, "Come! Gather for the great banquet of

God. Eat the flesh of kings, generals, warriors, horses and their riders, and all free people and slaves, both important or insignificant people."

I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army. The beast and the false prophet who had done miracles for the beast were captured. By these miracles the false prophet had deceived those who had the brand of the beast and worshiped its statue. Both of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rider on the horse killed the rest with the sword that came out of his mouth. All the birds gorged themselves on the flesh of those who had been killed.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



God Offers Full Redemption: *"O Israel, wait and watch for God—with God's arrival comes love, with God's arrival comes generous redemption." Psalm 130:7*

PRAISE RATIONALE

Forgiveness is His Habit

Psalm 130 (The Msg)

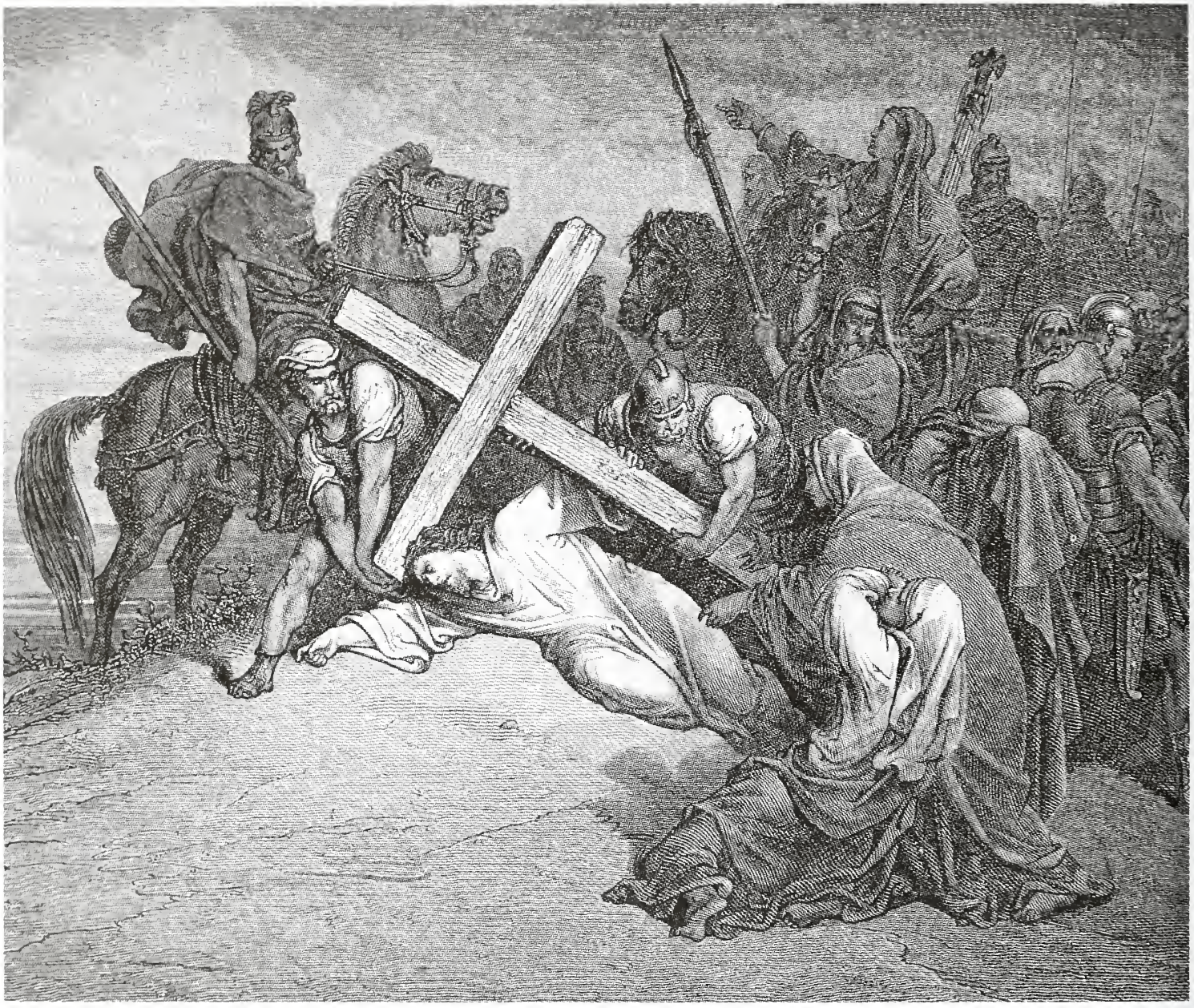
Goodness of God

Help, God—the bottom has fallen out of my life! Master, hear my cry for help! Listen hard! Open your ears! Listen to my cries for mercy. If you, God, kept records on wrongdoings, who would stand a chance? As it turns out, forgiveness is your habit, and that's why you're worshiped.

I pray to God—my life a prayer—and wait for what he'll say and do. My life's on the line before God, my Lord, waiting and watching till morning, waiting and watching till morning.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



The Secret to Power is Prayer: *" When He had finished praying, one of them said, "Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples to pray." Jesus answered, "Let me give you an example." Luke 11:1*

PRAYER (Part 1)

Example of Effective Prayer

Luke 11 (CW)

Consistency in Prayer

One day Jesus and His disciples went to a certain place to pray. When He had finished praying, one of them said, "Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples to pray." Jesus answered, "Let me give you an example. Pray something like this: Father in heaven, may your name be honored in all that we do. May your kingdom come soon. Until it does, may we do your will here as if we were already in heaven. Please provide the food we need today.

Forgive us our sins as you expect us to forgive others. Don't allow more temptation to come to us than we can handle, but save us from evil."

Then Jesus continued, "Let me explain to you what praying is like. Suppose you went to your friend's house about midnight, knocked on his door and said, `Friend, do you have three loaves of bread I could

borrow? A friend of mine has come to see me unexpectedly, and I'm all out of food.'

The friend inside will say, `Do you realize what time of night it is? Why couldn't you wait until morning? My kids are sleeping, and if I get up and go rummaging through the house for bread, I'll wake up the whole family.' Though your friend will hesitate to wake up his family to give you what you need, if you persist and keep asking, he'll get up and get the bread you need because he's your friend. The two of you are so close that no matter how often you ask, it won't affect your relationship.

So don't be afraid to ask God for what you need because you will receive it; look for spiritual blessings and you'll find them; heaven's door is always open to you. Everyone who asks will receive, and he who seeks will find, and for those who knock, the door will open.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

The Bible is the beginning of knowledge, the source of wisdom, the foundation of truth. The Bible is unmatched among books.

Unknown

Prayer Works When One Perseveres: *"So what makes you think God won't step in and work justice for his chosen people, who continue to cry out for help?" Luke 18:7*

PRAYER (Part 2)

Principles on Prayer and Perseverance

Luke 18 (The Msg)

Persistence in Prayer

Jesus told them a story showing that it was necessary for them to pray consistently and never quit. He said, "There was once a judge in some city who never gave God a thought and cared nothing for people. A widow in that city kept after him: 'My rights are being violated. Protect me!'

"He never gave her the time of day. But after this went on and on he said to himself, 'I care nothing what God thinks, even less what people think. But because this widow won't quit badgering me, I'd better do something and see that she gets justice—otherwise I'm going to end up beaten black and blue by her pounding.' "

Then the Master said, "Do you hear what that judge, corrupt as he is, is saying? So what makes you think God won't step in and work justice for his chosen people, who continue to cry out for help? Won't he stick up for them? I assure you, he will. He will not drag his feet. But

how much of that kind of persistent faith will the Son of Man find on the earth when he returns?"

He told his next story to some who were complacently pleased with themselves over their moral performance and looked down their noses at the common people: "Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax man. The Pharisee posed and prayed like this: 'Oh, God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, crooks, adulterers, or, heaven forbid, like this tax man. I fast twice a week and tithe on all my income.'

"Meanwhile the tax man, slumped in the shadows, his face in his hands, not daring to look up, said, 'God, give mercy. Forgive me, a sinner.' "

Jesus commented, "This tax man, not the other, went home made right with God. If you walk around with your nose in the air, you're going to end up flat on your face, but if you're content to be simply yourself, you will become more than yourself."

Then Jesus took the Twelve off to the side and said, "Listen carefully. We're on our way up to Jerusalem. Everything written in the Prophets about the Son of Man will take place. He will be handed over to the Romans, jeered at, made sport of, and spit on. Then, after giving him the third degree, they will kill him. In three days he will rise, alive."

But they didn't get it, could make neither heads nor tails of what he was talking about.

He came to the outskirts of Jericho. A blind man was sitting beside the road asking for handouts. When he heard the rustle of the crowd, he asked what was going on. They told him, "Jesus the Nazarene is going by."

He yelled, "Jesus! Son of David! Mercy, have mercy on me!"

Those ahead of Jesus told the man to shut up, but he only yelled all the louder, "Son of David! Mercy, have mercy on me!"

Jesus stopped and ordered him to be brought over. When he had come near, Jesus asked, "What do you want from me?"

He said, "Master, I want to see again."

Jesus said, "Go ahead—see again! Your faith has saved and healed you!" The healing was instant: He looked up, seeing—and then followed Jesus, glorifying God. Everyone in the street joined in, shouting praise to God.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

There Comes a Time When Mercy Will Plead No More: *"God doesn't lose his temper. He's powerful, but it's a patient power. Still, no one gets by with anything. Sooner or later, everyone pays." Nahum 1:3*

PROBATION CLOSED

When Mercy Runs Out

Nahum 1 (The Msg)

The Judgement on Nineveh

A report on the problem of Nineveh, the way God gave Nahum of Elkosh to see it: God is serious business. He won't be trifled with. He avenges his foes. He stands up against his enemies, fierce and raging.

But God doesn't lose his temper. He's powerful, but it's a patient power. Still, no one gets by with anything. Sooner or later, everyone pays. Tornadoes and hurricanes are the wake of his passage, storm clouds are the dust he shakes off his feet. He yells at the sea: It dries up. All the rivers run dry. The Bashan and Carmel mountains shrivel, the Lebanon orchards shrivel. Mountains quake in their roots, hills dissolve into mud flats. Earth shakes in fear of God. The whole world's in a panic. Who can face such towering anger? Who can stand up to this fierce rage? His anger spills out like a river of lava, his fury shatters boulders.

God is good, a hiding place in tough times. He recognizes and welcomes anyone looking for help, No matter how desperate the trouble. But cozy islands of escape He wipes right off the map. No one gets away from God. Why waste time conniving against God? He's putting an end to all such scheming. For troublemakers, no second chances. Like a pile of dry brush, soaked in oil, they'll go up in flames. Nineveh's an anthill of evil plots against God, a think tank for lies that seduce and betray. And God has something to say about all this: "Even though you're on top of the world, with all the applause and all the votes, you'll be mowed down flat. I've afflicted you, Judah, true, but I won't afflict you again. From now on I'm taking the yoke from your neck and splitting it up for kindling. I'm cutting you free from the ropes of your bondage."

God's orders on Nineveh: "You're the end of the line. It's all over with Nineveh. I'm gutting your temple. Your gods and goddesses go in the trash. I'm digging your grave. It's an unmarked grave. You're nothing—no, you're less than nothing!"

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

There are three hard things: steel, a diamond, and to know one's self.

Creatures and Creation are Under the Control of the Sovereign God: *"When they moved I heard their wings—it was like the roar of a great waterfall, like the voice of The Strong God, like the noise of a battlefield. When they stopped, they folded their wings." Ezekiel 1:24*

PROVIDENCE– THE CREATION

A Visual Illustration of Divine Work

Ezekiel 1 (The Msg)

Divine Theophany

Their faces looked like this: In front a human face, on the right side the face of a lion, on the left the face of an ox, and in back the face of an eagle. So much for the faces. The wings were spread out with the tips of one pair touching the creature on either side; the other pair of wings covered its body. Each creature went straight ahead. Wherever the spirit went, they went. They didn't turn as they went.

The four creatures looked like a blazing fire, or like fiery torches. Tongues of fire shot back and forth between the creatures, and out of the fire, bolts of lightning. The creatures flashed back and forth like strikes of lightning. As I watched the four creatures, I saw something that looked like a wheel on the ground beside each of the four-faced creatures. This is what the wheels looked like: They were identical

wheels, sparkling like diamonds in the sun. It looked like they were wheels within wheels, like a gyroscope.

They went in any one of the four directions they faced, but straight, not veering off. The rims were immense, circled with eyes. When the living creatures went, the wheels went; when the living creatures lifted off, the wheels lifted off. Wherever the spirit went, they went, the wheels sticking right with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. When the creatures went, the wheels went; when the creatures stopped, the wheels stopped; when the creatures lifted off, the wheels lifted off, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

Over the heads of the living creatures was something like a dome, shimmering like a sky full of cut glass, vaulted over their heads. Under the dome one set of wings was extended toward the others, with another set of wings covering their bodies. When they moved I heard their wings—it was like the roar of a great waterfall, like the voice of The Strong God, like the noise of a battlefield. When they stopped, they folded their wings.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

_____

_____

The pressure of His hand is on all nature like a prayer.

Margaret Sangster

One of Solomon's Crowning Achievements was to Build the Temple at Jerusalem:
"When Solomon had finished the temple of the LORD and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the LORD and in his own palace, the LORD appeared to him at night." 2 Chronicles 7:11

RECIPROCITY

Conditions for Blessings

2 Chronicles 7 (NIV)

Promises and Conditions for Divine Blessings

When Solomon had finished the temple of the LORD and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the LORD and in his own palace, the LORD appeared to him at night and said: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices.

"When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.

"As for you, if you walk before me as David your father did, and do all I command, and observe my decrees and laws, I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father when I said, 'You shall never fail to have a man to rule over Israel.'

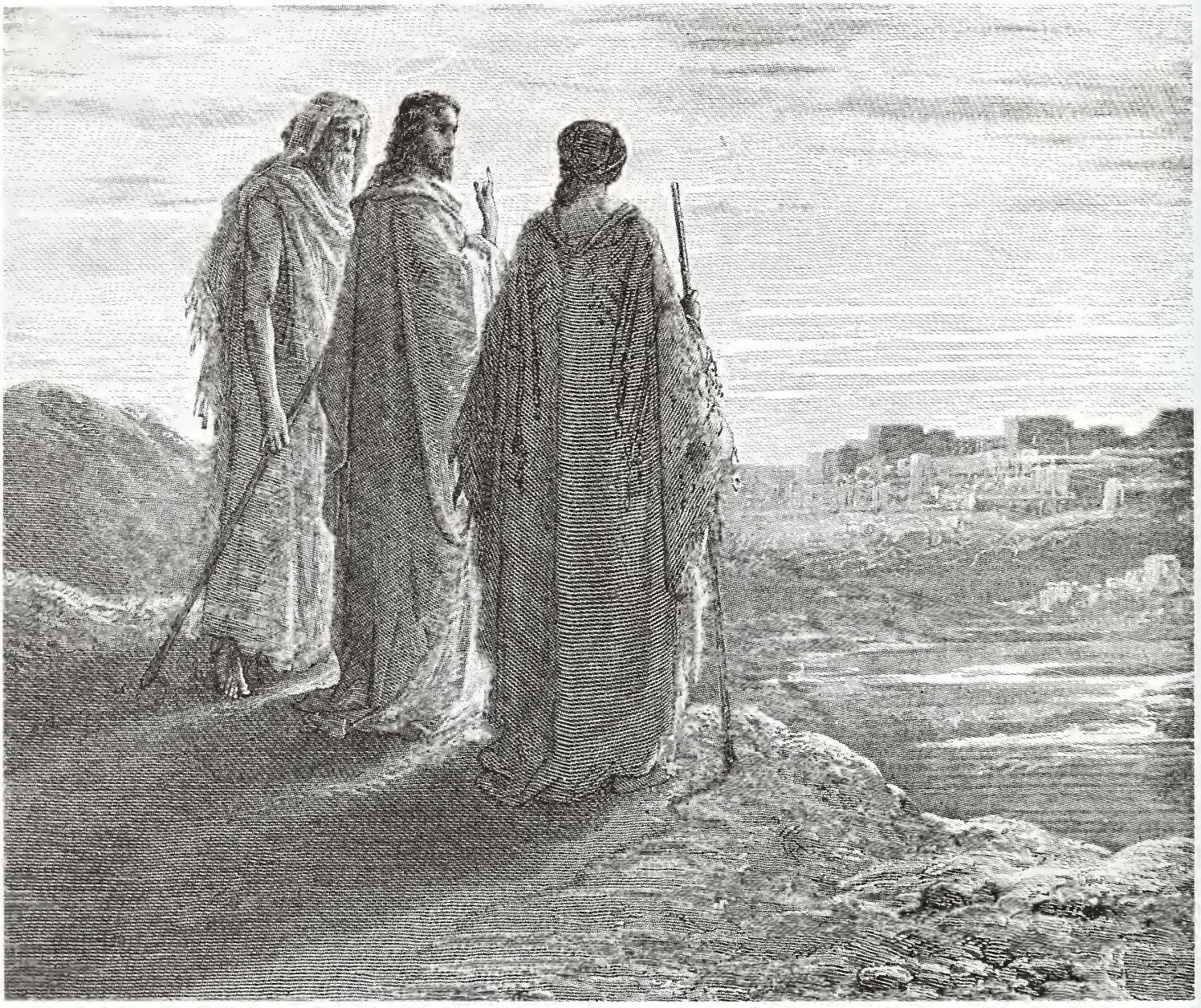
"But if you turn away and forsake the decrees and commands I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will uproot Israel from my land, which I have given them, and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. I will make it a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples. And though this temple is now so imposing, all who pass by will be appalled and say, 'Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land and to this temple?' People will answer, 'Because they have forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshiping and serving them–that is why he brought all this disaster on them.'"

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

I pray Thee, O God, that I may be beautiful within.

Socrates



Christ's Life Demonstrates the Love We Should Have for Others: *"Love sincerely. Hate evil. Hold on to what is good. Be devoted to each other like a loving family. Excel in showing respect for each other. Don't be lazy in showing your devotion." Romans 12:9*

RELATIONSHIPS

Love in Practice

Romans 12 (GW)

Relational Responsibility

Brothers and sisters, in view of all we have just shared about God's compassion, I encourage you to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, dedicated to God and pleasing to him. This kind of worship is appropriate for you. Don't become like the people of this world. Instead, change the way you think. Then you will always be able to determine what God really wants—what is good, pleasing, and perfect. Because of the kindness that God has shown me, I ask you not to think of yourselves more highly than you should. Instead, your thoughts should lead you to use good judgment based on what God has given each of you as believers.

Love sincerely. Hate evil. Hold on to what is good. Be devoted to each other like a loving family. Excel in showing respect for each other. Don't be lazy in showing your devotion. Use your energy to serve the Lord. Be happy in your confidence, be patient in trouble, and pray

continually. Share what you have with God's people who are in need. Be hospitable.

Bless those who persecute you. Bless them, and don't curse them. Be happy with those who are happy. Be sad with those who are sad. Live in harmony with each other. Don't be arrogant, but be friendly to humble people. Don't think that you are smarter than you really are.

Don't pay people back with evil for the evil they do to you. Focus your thoughts on those things that are considered noble. As much as it is possible, live in peace with everyone. Don't take revenge, dear friends. Instead, let God's anger take care of it. After all, Scripture says, "I alone have the right to take revenge. I will pay back, says the Lord." But, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink. If you do this, you will make him feel guilty and ashamed."

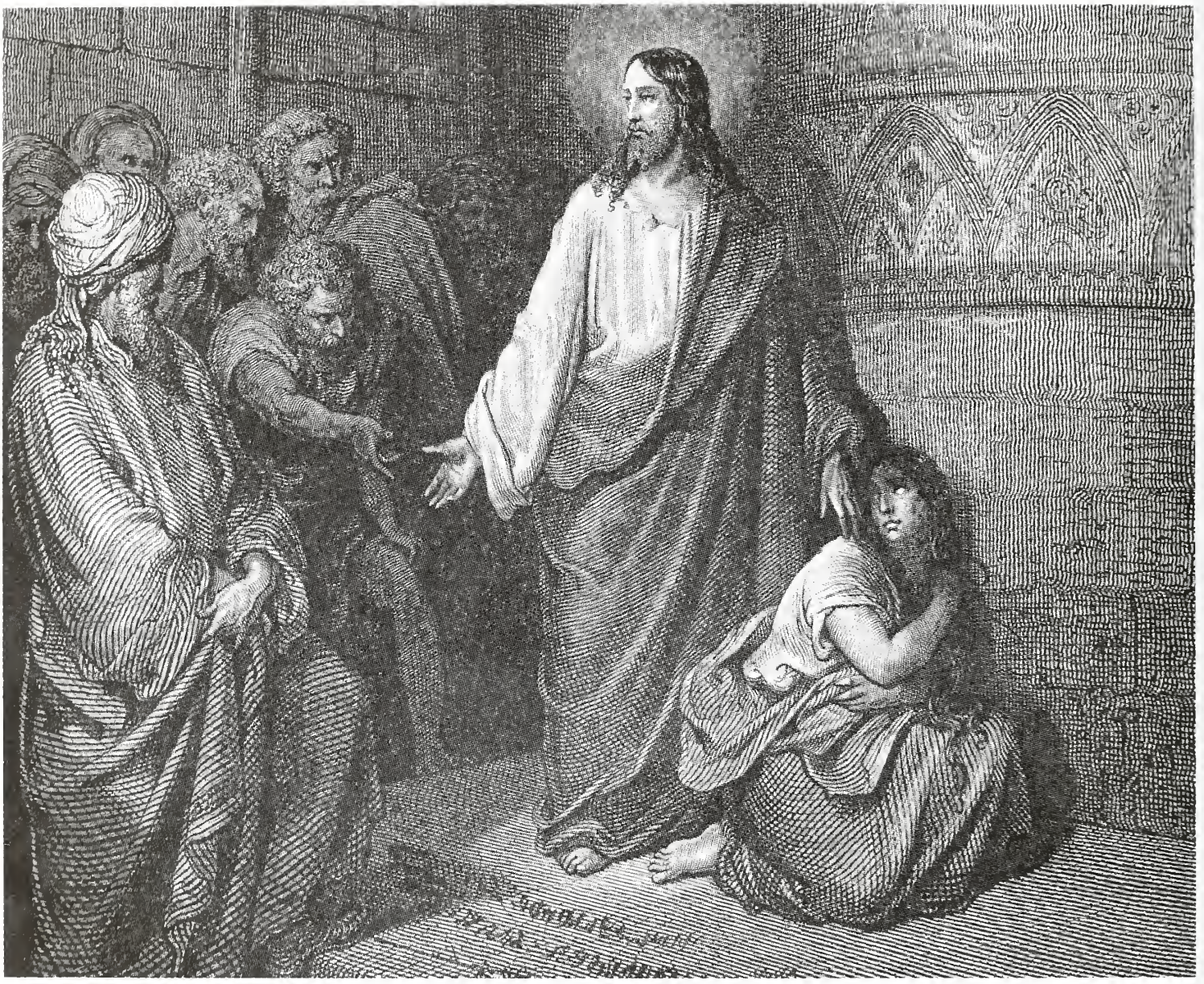
Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil with good.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

God's words are worth much and cost little.

Unknown



God Respects Humility and Contrition: *"I know my weaknesses, and I am all too conscious of my sinful nature. I have sinned against you and you are the only One who knew about it. What I did in secret was all the more wicked because I knew you were watching me, but I did it anyway." Psalm 51:3*

REPENTANCE

Components of a Repentant Heart

Psalm 51 (CW)

David's Repentance

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving kindness. According to your abundant mercy, blot out my sins. Wash away my guilt and cleanse me from sin. I know my weaknesses, and I am all too conscious of my sinful nature.

I have sinned against you and you are the only One who knew about it. What I did in secret was all the more wicked because I knew you were watching me, but I did it anyway. You are justified in declaring me guilty and have a right to condemn me.

From the day my mother conceived me, my nature inclined toward evil. You look for purity and truth of heart. But for this I need wisdom and strength which I don't have. Use hyssop to purge my sin with blood from the sacrifice, and I will be clean. Wash me and I will be whiter than snow.

Let joy and gladness bubble up from within me. Let the bones you crushed rejoice with singing. Don't look at my sins; blot out my iniq-

uities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a right spirit within me. Don't ask me to leave your presence, and don't take the Holy Spirit away from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and grant me a willing heart to obey you.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Let me live, O God, and forgive me of the crime of murder. You are the God of salvation. Only when I am forgiven can I truly open my mouth in praise and tell others about your mercy and your righteousness. Help me, O Lord, for I want to tell others how good you really are. If I knew you needed animal sacrifices to forgive me, I would gladly bring them. But that is not why you forgive sins. The sacrifice you want is a humble and teachable spirit and a broken and contrite heart. This is what's most important to you.

O God, don't let Zion suffer because of my sins. Please bless your people and make Jerusalem prosper in spite of me. Only after I have humbly confessed my sins will you be pleased with animal sacrifices, with calves and young bulls offered as burnt offerings.

THE MESSAGE

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

We have done away with the devil these days because man can now be trusted to carry on the work himself.

Thomas Merton

Ezekiel Was Fearless in Sharing Truth: *"'But if the watchman sees war coming and doesn't blow the trumpet, warning the people, and war comes and takes anyone off, I'll hold the watchman responsible for the bloodshed of any unwarned sinner.'" Ezekiel 33:6*

RESPONSIBLE WITNESSING

Accountability and Brotherhood

Ezekiel 33 (The Msg)

Responsibility to Share

God's Message came to me: "Son of man, speak to your people. Tell them: 'If I bring war on this land and the people take one of their citizens and make him their watchman, and if the watchman sees war coming and blows the trumpet, warning the people, then if anyone hears the sound of the trumpet and ignores it and war comes and takes him off, it's his own fault. He heard the alarm, he ignored it—it's his own fault. If he had listened, he would have saved his life.

" 'But if the watchman sees war coming and doesn't blow the trumpet, warning the people, and war comes and takes anyone off, I'll hold the watchman responsible for the bloodshed of any unwarned sinner.'

"You, son of man, are the watchman. I've made you a watchman for Israel. The minute you hear a message from me, warn them. If I say to

the wicked, 'Wicked man, wicked woman, you're on the fast track to death!' and you don't speak up and warn the wicked to change their ways, the wicked will die unwarned in their sins and I'll hold you responsible for their bloodshed. But if you warn the wicked to change their ways and they don't do it, they'll die in their sins well-warned and at least you will have saved your own life.

"Son of man, speak to Israel. Tell them: 'You've said, "Our rebellions and sins are weighing us down. We're wasting away. How can we go on living?" '

"Tell them, 'As sure as I am the living God, I take no pleasure from the death of the wicked. I want the wicked to change their ways and live. Turn your life around! Reverse your evil ways! Why die, Israel?' There's more, son of man. Tell your people: 'A good person's good life won't save him when he decides to rebel, and a bad person's bad life won't prevent him from repenting of his rebellion. A good person who sins can't expect to live when he chooses to sin. It's true that I tell good people, "Live! Be alive!" But if they trust in their good deeds and turn to evil, that good life won't amount to a hill of beans. They'll die for their evil life.

" 'On the other hand, if I tell a wicked person, "You'll die for your wicked life," and he repents of his sin and starts living a righteous and just life—being generous to the down-and-out, restoring what he had stolen, cultivating life-nourishing ways that don't hurt others—he'll

live. He won't die. None of his sins will be kept on the books. He's doing what's right, living a good life. He'll live.

"'Your people say, "The Master's way isn't fair." But it's the way they're living that isn't fair. When good people turn back from living good lives and plunge into sin, they'll die for it. And when a wicked person turns away from his wicked life and starts living a just and righteous life, he'll come alive.

"'Still, you keep on saying, "The Master's way isn't fair." We'll see, Israel. I'll decide on each of you exactly according to how you live.' "

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

God is Loving and Forgiving: *"Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy." Micah 7:18*

RESTORATION

Everything Will Be Made Right–Finally!

Micah 7 (NKJV)

What God Will Do In the End

Woe is me! For I am like those who gather summer fruits, like those who glean vintage grapes; there is no cluster to eat of the first-ripe fruit which my soul desires. The faithful man has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood; every man hunts his brother with a net. That they may successfully do evil with both hands–the prince asks for gifts, the judge seeks a bribe, and the great man utters his evil desire; so they scheme together. The best of them is like a brier; the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge; the day of your watchman and your punishment comes; now shall be their perplexity.

Do not trust in a friend; do not put your confidence in a companion; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom. For son dishonors father, daughter rises against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own household.

Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me forth to the light; I will see His righteousness. Then she who is my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, "Where is the Lord your God?" My eyes will see her; now she will be trampled down like mud in the streets. In the day when your walls are to be built, in that day the decree shall go far and wide.

In that day they shall come to you from Assyria and the fortified cities, from the fortress to the River, from sea to sea, and mountain to mountain. Yet the land shall be desolate because of those who dwell in it, and for the fruit of their deeds.

Shepherd Your people with Your staff, the flock of Your heritage, who dwell solitarily in a woodland, in the midst of Carmel; let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in days of old. "As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt, I will show them wonders." The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might; they shall put their hand over their mouth; their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent; they shall crawl from their holes like snakes of the earth. They shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of You.

Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His

anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from days of old.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

_____

_____

_____

The Resurrection Account of Lazarus Elicits Love and Hope: *"Then those believers living at that time will be changed and, together with those who have been resurrected, will be caught up in the sky to meet the Lord in the air, and from then on, we will all be with the Lord. So comfort and encourage each other with these words." 1 Thessalonians 4:17*

RESURRECTION

Encourage Yourself with the Resurrection Hope

1 Thessalonians 4 (CW)

Resurrection and Advent

We beg you, in the name of the Lord Jesus and for His sake, that you put into practice what you've learned from us and live more and more for the glory of God. You know what we taught and the guidelines we gave you, not on our own authority, but on the authority of Jesus Christ.

The will of God is that your lives be different from the lives of unbelievers. So don't do all the immoral things that they do, sexual or otherwise. Every one of you should know how to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable. Don't be stimulated into passion like the heathen who don't know or care about God.

And don't lie and defraud your brother in Christ or do him wrong in any other way. As we told you before, the Lord will punish those who do these things by letting them reap the consequences of what they've done. God has not called us to be impure, but He has called us

to live lives of purity and holiness. Whoever rejects our teaching is not only rejecting us, but is rejecting God, who spoke to us through His Holy Spirit and told us what to tell you.

Now I don't need to write to you about brotherly love because the Holy Spirit Himself has taught you to love one another. You've already shown this love by the attitude you have toward fellow believers throughout Macedonia. But I'm urging you on because I want you to love each other even more.

Make it your aim to live quiet and orderly lives, minding your own business and working to earn an honest living as we have taught you to do. This way you'll be seen by unbelievers as being honest citizens, and you'll be able to take care of yourselves without depending on others. Brothers, I want you to know the truth of what I told you when I was with you. Your loved ones who have died are sleeping in Christ. Don't grieve over them as people grieve over their dead, as if there were no hope. Jesus died and rose again; therefore, those who died believing in Him will be raised to life by God just as Jesus was. We're telling you this by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. What He taught us was that we who are still alive when He comes will not be taken to heaven ahead of our loved ones who have died in Christ and are now sleeping.

When Christ descends from heaven as the Archangel, He will give a shout of command, the trumpet call of God to the dead, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then those believers living at that time will be

changed and, together with those who have been resurrected, will be caught up in the sky to meet the Lord in the air, and from then on, we will all be with the Lord. So comfort and encourage each other with these words.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Every Person Must Choose the Path They Will Walk: *"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers." Psalm 1:1*

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Contrasting Right and Wrong

Psalm 1 (NIV)

Righteous and Wicked

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

THE UNIVERSAL LESSON BOOK

101-PLUS POWERFUL SPIRITUAL READINGS FOR UNDERSTANDING, SUCCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

TWENTY-FOUR ADDITIONAL GOLDEN CHAPTERS

God Encourages Passionate Love of Marital Partners: *"How beautiful your love, dear, dear friend—far more pleasing than a fine, rare wine, your fragrance more exotic than select spices. The kisses of your lips are honey, my love, every syllable you speak a delicacy to savor." Song of Solomon 4:10*

ROMANCE

Learning the Language of Love

Song of Solomon 4 (The Msg)

Love for a Spouse

You're so beautiful, my darling, so beautiful, and your dove eyes are veiled. By your hair as it flows and shimmers, like a flock of goats in the distance streaming down a hillside in the sunshine. Your smile is generous and full—expressive and strong and clean. Your lips are jewel red, your mouth elegant and inviting, your veiled cheeks soft and radiant. The smooth, lithe lines of your neck command notice—all heads turn in awe and admiration!

Your breasts are like fawns, twins of a gazelle, grazing among the first spring flowers. The sweet, fragrant curves of your body, the soft, spiced contours of your flesh invite me, and I come. I stay until dawn breathes its light and night slips away. You're beautiful from head to toe, my dear love, beautiful beyond compare, absolutely flawless.

Come with me from Lebanon, my bride. Leave Lebanon behind, and come. Leave your high mountain hideaway. Abandon your wilder-

ness seclusion, where you keep company with lions and panthers guard your safety.

You've captured my heart, dear friend. You looked at me, and I fell in love. One look my way and I was hopelessly in love! How beautiful your love, dear, dear friend—far more pleasing than a fine, rare wine, your fragrance more exotic than select spices. The kisses of your lips are honey, my love, every syllable you speak a delicacy to savor. Your clothes smell like the wild outdoors, the ozone scent of high mountains.

Dear lover and friend, you're a secret garden, a private and pure fountain. Body and soul, you are paradise, a whole orchard of succulent fruits—Ripe apricots and peaches, oranges and pears; Nut trees and cinnamon, and all scented woods; Mint and lavender, and all herbs aromatic; a garden fountain, sparkling and splashing, fed by spring waters from the Lebanon mountains.

Wake up, North Wind, get moving, South Wind! Breathe on my garden, fill the air with spice fragrance. Oh, let my lover enter his garden! Yes, let him eat the fine, ripe fruits.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Love is or it ain't. Thin love ain't love at all.

Toni Morrison

Haggai Challenged the Jews to Prioritize the Building of God's House: *"How is it that it's the 'right time' for you to live in your fine new homes while the Home, God's Temple, is in ruins?" Haggai 1:4*

SACRIFICE

Appealing on Behalf of God

Haggai 1 (The Msg)

Haggai Reasons With the Returning Jews

On the first day of the sixth month of the second year in the reign of King Darius of Persia, God's Message was delivered by the prophet Haggai to the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and to the high priest, Joshua son of Jehozadak:

A Message from God-of-the-Angel-Armies: "The people procrastinate. They say this isn't the right time to rebuild my Temple, the Temple of God."

Shortly after that, God said more and Haggai spoke it: "How is it that it's the 'right time' for you to live in your fine new homes while the Home, God's Temple, is in ruins?"

And then a little later, God-of-the-Angel-Armies spoke out again: "Take a good, hard look at your life. Think it over. You have spent a lot of money, but you haven't much to show for it. You keep filling your plates, but you never get filled up. You keep drinking and drinking and

drinking, but you're always thirsty. You put on layer after layer of clothes, but you can't get warm. And the people who work for you, what are they getting out of it? Not much—a leaky, rusted-out bucket, that's what.

That's why God-of-the-Angel-Armies said: "Take a good, hard look at your life. Think it over." Then God said: "Here's what I want you to do: Climb into the hills and cut some timber. Bring it down and rebuild the Temple. Do it just for me. Honor me. You've had great ambitions for yourselves, but nothing has come of it.

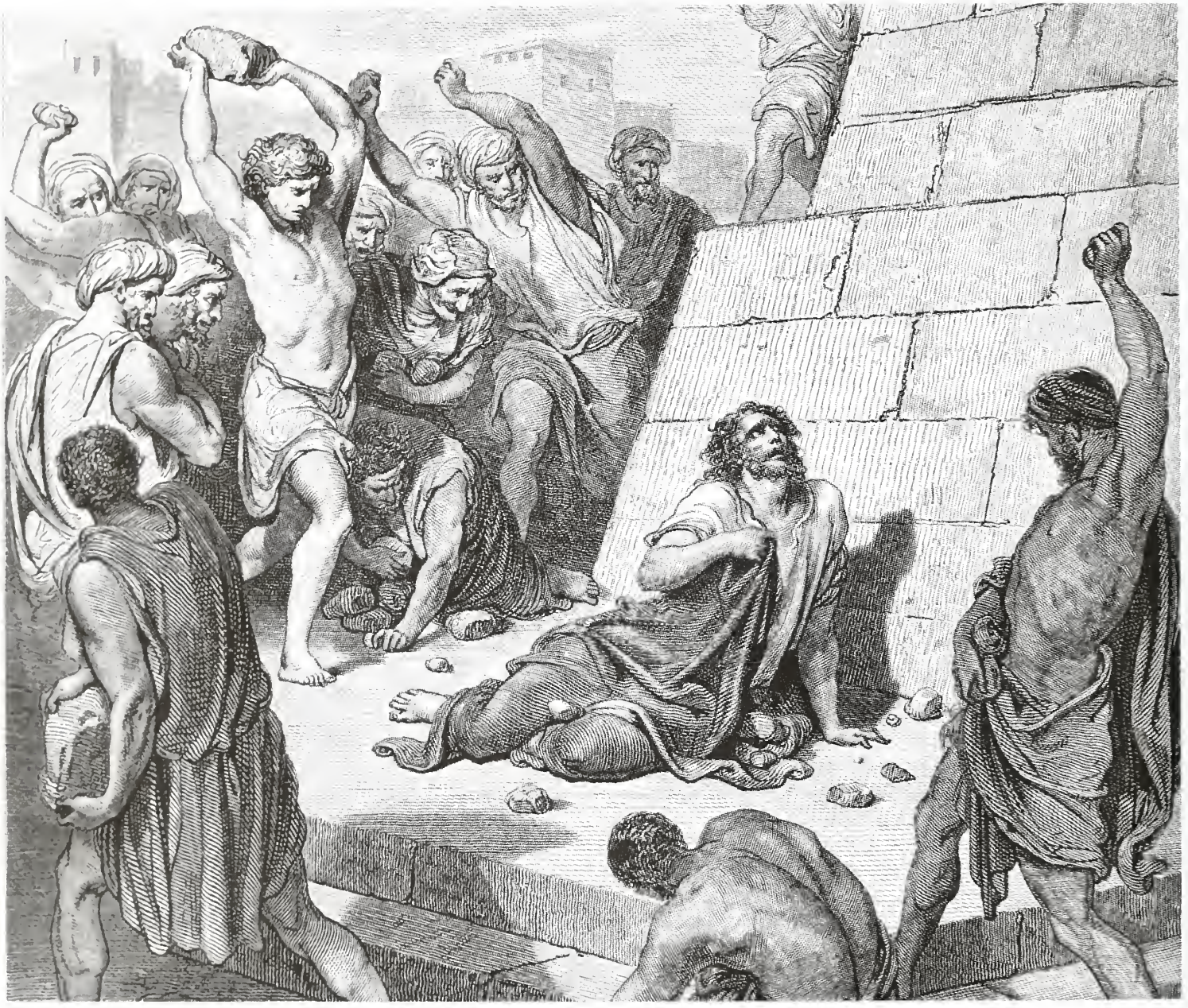
The little you have brought to my Temple I've blown away—there was nothing to it. "And why?" (This is a Message from God-of-the-Angel-Armies, remember.) "Because while you've run around, caught up with taking care of your own houses, my Home is in ruins. That's why. Because of your stinginess. And so I've given you a dry summer and a skimpy crop. I've matched your tight-fisted stinginess by decreeing a season of drought, drying up fields and hills, withering gardens and orchards, stunting vegetables and fruit. Nothing—not man or woman, not animal or crop—is going to thrive."Then the governor, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and the high priest, Joshua son of Jehozadak, and all the people with them listened, really listened, to the voice of their God. When God sent the prophet Haggai to them, they paid attention to him. In listening to Haggai, they honored God.

Then Haggai, God's messenger, preached God's Message to the people: "I am with you!" God's Word. This is how God got Zerubbabel,

Joshua, and all the people moving—got them working on the Temple of God-of-the-Angel-Armies. This happened on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of King Darius.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



Paul Shows Us the Secret: *"Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness." Colossians 2:6*

SANCTIFICATION

Achieving Spiritual Mastery

Colossians 2 (NIV)

Spiritual Development

I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: "Do not

handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Christ Set the Ultimate Example of Humility With His Death on the Cross: *"When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process." Philippians 2:7*

SERVANTHOOD

What True Servants Do

Philippians 2 (The Msg)

Incarnation of Christ

If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special

privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that: a crucifixion.

Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father.

What I'm getting at, friends, is that you should simply keep on doing what you've done from the beginning. When I was living among you, you lived in responsive obedience. Now that I'm separated from you, keep it up. Better yet, redouble your efforts. Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. That energy is God's energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure. Do everything readily and cheerfully—no bickering, no second-guessing allowed! Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night so I'll have good cause to be proud of you on the day that Christ returns. You'll be living proof that I didn't go to all this work for nothing. Even if I am executed here and now, I'll rejoice in being an element in the offering of your faith that you make on Christ's altar, a part of your rejoicing. But turnabout's fair play—you must join me in my rejoicing. Whatever you do, don't feel sorry for me. I plan (according to Jesus' plan) to send

Timothy to you very soon so he can bring back all the news of you he can gather. Oh, how that will do my heart good! I have no one quite like Timothy. He is loyal, and genuinely concerned for you. Most people around here are looking out for themselves, with little concern for the things of Jesus. But you know yourselves that Timothy's the real thing. He's been a devoted son to me as together we've delivered the Message. As soon as I see how things are going to fall out for me here, I plan to send him off. And then I'm hoping and praying to be right on his heels.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Elijah Represents Those Who are Translated to Heaven Without Seeing Death:
"As they continued walking and talking, a fiery chariot with fiery horses separated the two of them, and Elijah went to heaven in a windstorm. When Elisha saw this, he cried out, 'Master! Master! Israel's chariot and horses!'" 2 Kings 2:11

SERVICE

Passing the Mantle of Service

2 Kings 2 (GW)

Elijah Taken Up Into Heaven

When the Lord was going to take Elijah to heaven in a windstorm, Elijah and Elisha left Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here because the Lord is sending me to Bethel." Elisha answered, "I solemnly swear, as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not abandon you." So they went to Bethel.

Some of the disciples of the prophets at Bethel came to Elisha. They asked him, "Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?" He answered, "Yes, I know. Be quiet." Elijah said, "Elisha, please stay here because the Lord is sending me to Jericho." Elisha answered, "I solemnly swear, as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not abandon you." So they went to Jericho. Then some of the disciples of the prophets who were in Jericho approached Elisha. They asked, "Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?" He answered, "Yes, I know. Be quiet."

Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here because the Lord is sending me to the Jordan River." Elisha answered, "I solemnly swear, as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not abandon you."

Fifty disciples of the prophets stood at a distance as Elijah and Elisha stood by the Jordan River. Elijah took his coat, rolled it up, and struck the water with it. The water divided to their left and their right, and the two men crossed {the river} on dry ground. While they were crossing, Elijah asked Elisha, "What should I do for you before I'm taken from you?" Elisha answered, "Let me inherit a double share of your spirit." Elijah said, "You have asked for something difficult. If you see me taken from you, it will be yours. Otherwise, it will not."

As they continued walking and talking, a fiery chariot with fiery horses separated the two of them, and Elijah went to heaven in a windstorm. When Elisha saw this, he cried out, "Master! Master! Israel's chariot and horses!" When he couldn't see Elijah anymore, he grabbed his own garment and tore it in two to show his grief. Then he picked up Elijah's coat (which had fallen off Elijah), went back, and stood on the bank of the Jordan River. He took the coat and struck the water with it. He asked, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

As he struck the water, it divided to his left and his right, and Elisha crossed {the river}. The disciples of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him from a distance. They said, "Elijah's spirit rests on Elisha!" Then they went to meet him and bowed in front of him with their faces touching the ground. They said to him, "There are 50 strong men here

with us. Please let them go and search for your master. Maybe the Lord's Spirit lifted him up and dropped him on one of the hills or in one of the valleys."

Elisha answered, "Don't send them {to look}." But the disciples kept urging him {to send the men} until he was embarrassed. So he said, "Send them." They sent 50 men who searched for three days without finding him. They returned to Elisha in Jericho, where he was waiting. He said, "Didn't I tell you not to go?"

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Despicable Deeds Have Their Origin in Human Evil: *"The temptation to give in to evil comes from us and only us. We have no one to blame but the leering, seducing flare-up of our own lust. Lust gets pregnant, and has a baby: sin! Sin grows up to adulthood, and becomes a real killer." James 1:14*

SIN AND EVIL

Etiology of Evil

James 1 (The Msg)

Origin of Sin

Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.

If you don't know what you're doing, pray to the Father. He loves to help. You'll get his help, and won't be condescended to when you ask for it. Ask boldly, believingly, without a second thought. People who "worry their prayers" are like wind-whipped waves. Don't think you're going to get anything from the Master that way, adrift at sea, keeping all your options open. When down-and-outers get a break, cheer! And when the arrogant rich are brought down to size, cheer! Prosperity is as short-lived as a wildflower, so don't ever count on it. You know that as soon as the sun rises, pouring down its scorching heat, the flower withers. Its petals wilt and, before you know it, that beautiful face is a

barren stem. Well, that's a picture of the "prosperous life." At the very moment everyone is looking on in admiration, it fades away to nothing.

Anyone who meets a testing challenge head-on and manages to stick it out is mighty fortunate. For such persons loyally in love with God, the reward is life and more life.

Don't let anyone under pressure to give in to evil say, "God is trying to trip me up." God is impervious to evil, and puts evil in no one's way. The temptation to give in to evil comes from us and only us. We have no one to blame but the leering, seducing flare-up of our own lust. Lust gets pregnant, and has a baby: sin! Sin grows up to adulthood, and becomes a real killer.

So, my very dear friends, don't get thrown off course. Every desirable and beneficial gift comes out of heaven. The gifts are rivers of light cascading down from the Father of Light. There is nothing deceitful in God, nothing two-faced, nothing fickle. He brought us to life using the true Word, showing us off as the crown of all his creatures. Post this at all the intersections, dear friends: Lead with your ears, follow up with your tongue, and let anger straggle along in the rear. God's righteousness doesn't grow from human anger. So throw all spoiled virtue and cancerous evil in the garbage. In simple humility, let our gardener, God, landscape you with the Word, making a salvation-garden of your life.

Don't fool yourself into thinking that you are a listener when you are anything but, letting the Word go in one ear and out the other. Act

on what you hear! Those who hear and don't act are like those who glance in the mirror, walk away, and two minutes later have no idea who they are, what they look like.

But whoever catches a glimpse of the revealed counsel of God—the free life!—even out of the corner of his eye, and sticks with it, is no distracted scatterbrain but a man or woman of action. That person will find delight and affirmation in the action. Anyone who sets himself up as "religious" by talking a good game is self-deceived. Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

God Gives Power to Resist Evil–Annanias Chose Not to Use it: *"It was sin, that is, the whole system of evil which has been part of our human nature since the fall of Adam, that condemned me to death." Romans 7:13*

SIN'S INSISTENCE

The Struggle With Sin That Persists

Romans 7-8 (CW)

Internal Struggle

I want you to understand one thing. God is holy; therefore, all His commandments are holy, just and good. How then did the law, which was given for my good, turn against me? It didn't. It was sin, that is, the whole system of evil which has been part of our human nature since the fall of Adam, that condemned me to death. It did this by twisting my thinking about the laws which were given for my good. Because sin twisted in the minds of men the holy, just and good commandments of God, nothing is considered sacred anymore. From this alone, we can see how totally evil sin really is.

Clearly then, the law as given by God has not only a moral function, but also a spiritual one. God's law is good. The problem is with my sinful human nature which, like a slave, is sold to perpetually serve sin. I was deceived into doing what I hated and not what I really wanted to do. I wanted to serve God, but ended up serving myself.

So if I do what I really don't want to do, then I'm admitting that what the law says about me is right–I'm born in sin and have a sinful human nature. However, I also realize that my problem isn't totally me, but the nature I was born with.

This means that my sinful human nature cannot be trusted because, no matter how much I want to do what is right. No matter how hard I try, I'm never able to be as good or to live as unselfishly as I really want to. What I do is not the good I want to do, because my sinful nature still deceives me, and I end up doing things I don't want to do.

Now if I do what I really don't want to do, I'm not actually the one doing it; it's my sinful human nature pushing me to do it. So I find it to be a law of life that when I want to do what's right, sin is always there to deceive me and push itself on me in one way or another.

I really appreciate having God's law to guide me, because I long so much to be holy and to live

An unselfish life. But inside me is a sinful nature. It's always there urging me to think about myself, no matter how I set my mind against it. It's even strong enough to overcome my innermost longings to be good.

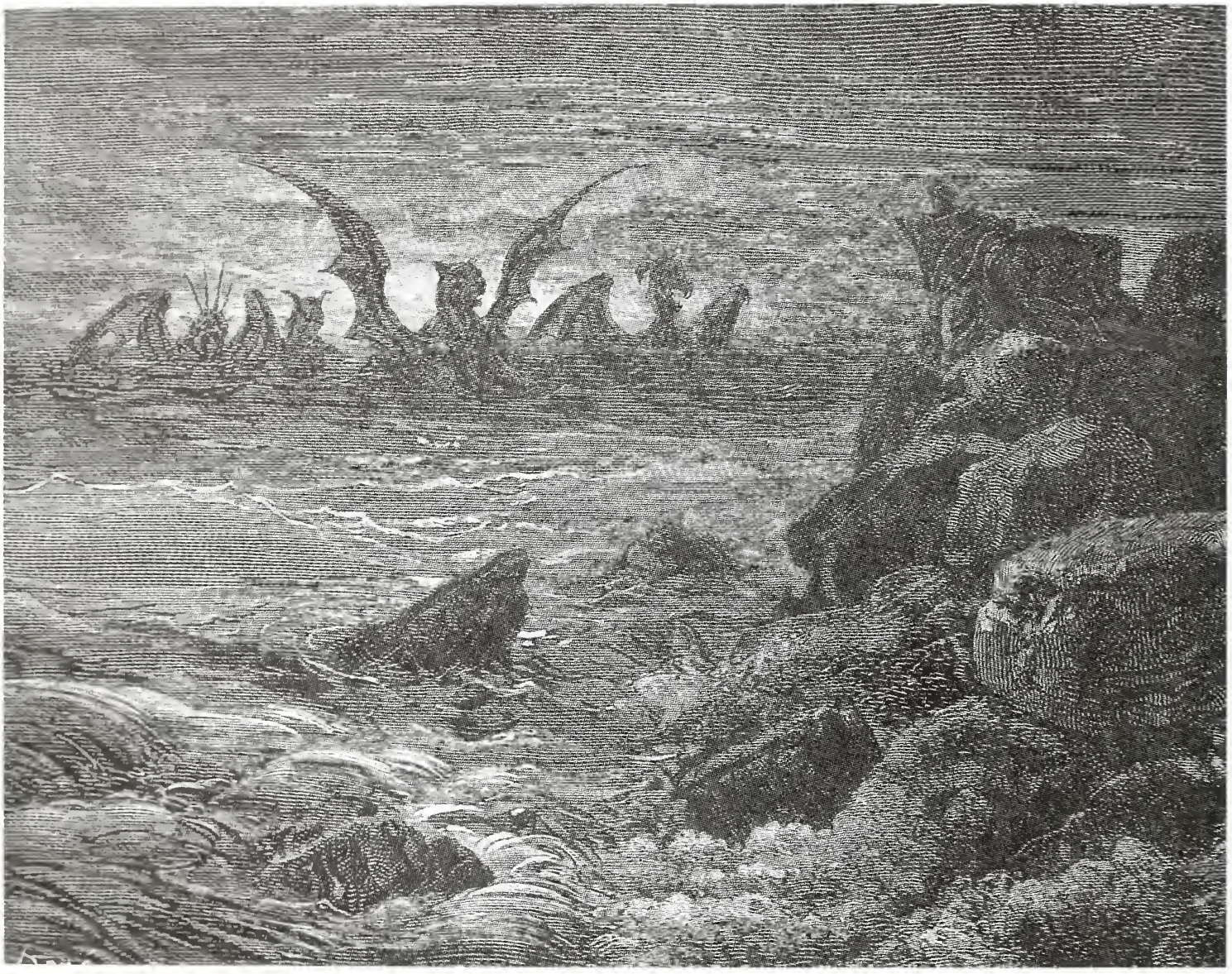
What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this sinful nature that is taking me to eternal death? Thanks to God, this problem has not been left for me to solve. It has been solved for me by Jesus Christ! Because of my sinful human nature, I still at times do wrong things and even right things for the wrong reasons. Nevertheless, with

my mind I continue to choose to serve the law of God, even though my sinful human nature is bent on serving the law of sin.

Therefore, there is no condemnation to those who hide in Christ, who refuse to follow the dictates of their sinful human natures, but whose lives are guided by the Holy Spirit.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



We Are In Serious Warfare Against Demonic Powers and Principalities: *"We're not dealing with an enemy we can see or get our hands on, but with spiritual beings who were once near the center of power and are now trying to rule this world. The power of these supernatural beings and the force they generate are not to be taken lightly." Ephesians 6:12*

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Soldiers, Strategies and Satan

Ephesians 6 (CW)

Satan Against the Right

Children, obey your parents unless it goes against God's commands, because that's the right thing to do. Respect your parents, whether they love the Lord or not, because that's the commandment to which God has attached a special promise. Life will be better for you and you'll even live longer. Fathers, don't mistreat your children or make them angry, but love them as members of God's family. Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, training them to serve others.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and stand in the power of His might. Put on every piece of spiritual armor. The Lord has given you all the weaponry you need to stand against the crafty enemy. We're not dealing with an enemy we can see or get our hands on, but with spiritual beings who were once near the center of power and are now trying to

rule this world. The power of these supernatural beings and the force they generate are not to be taken lightly.

That's why you must put on the entire spiritual armor God has given you and stand firm, not giving an inch of ground. Then when it's over, you'll still be standing. This is the time to stand. Tighten the belt of truth securely around yourself. Cover your chest with the breastplate of Christ's invincible righteousness. Put on the shoes of the good news of Christ's peace. Take up the shield of faith, trusting in the Lord to stop the flaming arrows which Satan sends your way. Then put on the helmet of salvation and take the sword of the Spirit, which is given you in the Word of God. Finally, pray constantly, as if your life depended on it. Keep alert to the needs of your brothers and sisters and pray for them too.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

When the devil brings up your past, bring up his future.

Financial Success Secret: *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." Malachi 3:10*

STEWARDSHIP

Blessings of Financial Integrity

Malachi 3 (NIV)

Tithing

"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty.

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years. "So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me," says the Lord Almighty.

"I the Lord do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty.

"But you ask, 'How are we to return?' Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse – the whole nation of you – because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the Lord Almighty. "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord Almighty.

"You have said harsh things against me," says the Lord. "Yet you ask, 'What have we said against you?' You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the Lord Almighty? But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly the evildoers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape.' "

Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name.

"They will be mine," says the Lord Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Jesus Mastered the Art of Teaching Truth Through Stories: *"Whenever someone has a ready heart for this, the insights and understandings flow freely. But if there is no readiness, any trace of receptivity soon disappears. That's why I tell stories: to create readiness, to nudge the people toward receptive insight." Matthew 13:12*

STORIES AND PARABLES

Powerful Stories

Matthew 13 (The Msg)

Parables of Jesus

At about that same time Jesus left the house and sat on the beach. In no time at all a crowd gathered along the shoreline, forcing him to get into a boat. Using the boat as a pulpit, he addressed his congregation, telling stories.

"What do you make of this? A farmer planted seed. As he scattered the seed, some of it fell on the road, and birds ate it. Some fell in the gravel; it sprouted quickly but didn't put down roots, so when the sun came up it withered just as quickly. Some fell in the weeds; as it came up, it was strangled by the weeds. Some fell on good earth, and produced a harvest beyond his wildest dreams. Are you listening to this? Really listening?"

The disciples came up and asked, "Why do you tell stories?" He replied, "You've been given insight into God's kingdom. You know

how it works. Not everybody has this gift, this insight; it hasn't been given to them. Whenever someone has a ready heart for this, the insights and understandings flow freely. But if there is no readiness, any trace of receptivity soon disappears. That's why I tell stories: to create readiness, to nudge the people toward receptive insight. In their present state they can stare till doomsday and not see it, listen till they're blue in the face and not get it. I don't want Isaiah's forecast repeated all over again:

Your ears are open but you don't hear a thing. Your eyes are awake but you don't see a thing. The people are blockheads! They stick their fingers in their ears so they won't have to listen; They screw their eyes shut so they won't have to look, so they won't have to deal with me face-to-face and let me heal them.

"But you have God-blessed eyes—eyes that see! And God-blessed ears—ears that hear! A lot of people, prophets and humble believers among them, would have given anything to see what you are seeing, to hear what you are hearing, but never had the chance.

"Study this story of the farmer planting seed. When anyone hears news of the kingdom and doesn't take it in, it just remains on the surface, and so the Evil One comes along and plucks it right out of that person's heart. This is the seed the farmer scatters on the road.

"The seed cast in the gravel—this is the person who hears and instantly responds with enthusiasm. But there is no soil of character,

and so when the emotions wear off and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it.

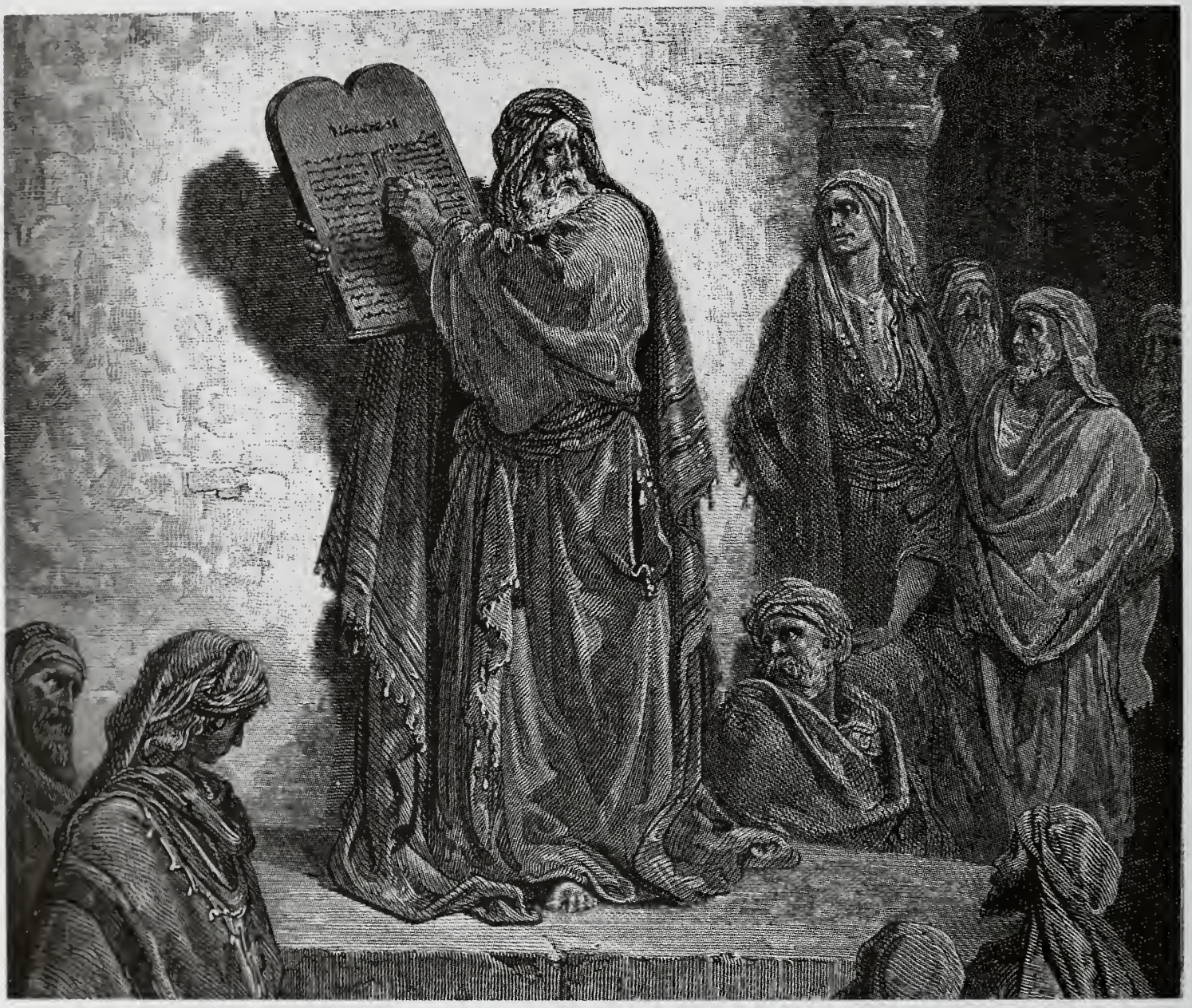
"The seed cast in the weeds is the person who hears the kingdom news, but weeds of worry and illusions about getting more and wanting everything under the sun strangle what was heard, and nothing comes of it.

"The seed cast on good earth is the person who hears and takes in the News, and then produces a harvest beyond his wildest dreams."

All Jesus did that day was tell stories—a long storytelling afternoon. His storytelling fulfilled the prophecy: I will open my mouth and tell stories; I will bring out into the open things hidden since the world's first day. When Jesus finished telling these stories, he left there, returned to his hometown, and gave a lecture in the meetinghouse. He made a real hit, impressing everyone. "We had no idea he was this good!" they said. "How did he get so wise, get such ability?"

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



Ezra Put God's Word First in the Plan to Return and Rebuild Jerusalem: *"I proclaimed a fast there beside the Ahava Canal, a fast to humble ourselves before our God and pray for wise guidance for our journey—all our people and possessions." Ezra 8:21*

STRATEGY

Strategic Trust in God's Providence

Ezra 8 (The Msg)

Exiles Return to Jerusalem

These are the family heads and those who signed up to go up with me from Babylon in the reign of Artaxerxes the king: (family heads listed, see Bible reference)

I gathered them together at the canal that runs to Ahava. We camped there three days. I looked them over and found that they were all laymen and priests but no Levites. So I sent for the leaders Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, and for the teachers Joiarib and Elnathan. I then sent them to Iddo, who is head of the town of Casiphia, and told them what to say to Iddo and his relatives who lived there in Casiphia: "Send us ministers for The Temple of God."

Well, the generous hand of our God was on us, and they brought back to us a wise man from the family of Mahli son of Levi, the son of Israel. His name was Sherebiah. With sons and brothers they numbered eighteen. They also brought Hashabiah and Jeshaiah of the fam-

ily of Merari, with brothers and their sons, another twenty. And then there were 220 temple servants, descendants of the temple servants that David and the princes had assigned to help the Levites in their work. They were all signed up by name.

I proclaimed a fast there beside the Ahava Canal, a fast to humble ourselves before our God and pray for wise guidance for our journey—all our people and possessions. I was embarrassed to ask the king for a cavalry bodyguard to protect us from bandits on the road. We had just told the king, "Our God lovingly looks after all those who seek him, but turns away in disgust from those who leave him."

So we fasted and prayed about these concerns. And he listened. Then I picked twelve of the leading priests—Sherebiah and Hashabiah with ten of their brothers. I weighed out for them the silver, the gold, the vessels, and the offerings for The Temple of our God that the king, his advisors, and all the Israelites had given tons of silver; 100 vessels of silver valued at three and three-quarter tons; three and three-quarter tons of gold; gold bowls weighing eighteen and a half pounds; vessels of bright red copper, as valuable as gold. I said to them, "You are holy to God and these vessels are holy. The silver and gold are Freewill-Offerings to the God of your ancestors. Guard them with your lives until you're able to weigh them out in a secure place in The Temple of our God for the priests and Levites and family heads who are in charge in Jerusalem."

The priests and Levites took charge of all that had been weighed out to them, and prepared to deliver it to Jerusalem to The Temple of our God. We left the Ahava Canal on the twelfth day of the first month to travel to Jerusalem. God was with us all the way and kept us safe from bandits and highwaymen.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

_____

_____

_____

Often When We are Suffering We Don't See the Divine Perspective: *"God said to Satan, 'Have you noticed my friend Job? There's no one quite like him—honest and true to his word, totally devoted to God and hating evil.'" Job 1:8*

SUFFERING

From Suffering and Sickness Clarity Emerges

Job 1 (The Msg)

Suffering of Job

Job was a man who lived in Uz. He was honest inside and out, a man of his word, who was totally devoted to God and hated evil with a passion. He had seven sons and three daughters. He was also very wealthy—seven thousand head of sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred teams of oxen, five hundred donkeys, and a huge staff of servants—the most influential man in all the East!

His sons used to take turns hosting parties in their homes, always inviting their three sisters to join them in their merrymaking. When the parties were over, Job would get up early in the morning and sacrifice a burnt offering for each of his children, thinking, "Maybe one of them sinned by defying God inwardly." Job made a habit of this sacrificial atonement, just in case they'd sinned. One day when the angels came to report to God, Satan, who was the Designated Accuser, came along

with them. God singled out Satan and said, "What have you been up to?" Satan answered God, "Going here and there, checking things out on earth."

God said to Satan, "Have you noticed my friend Job? There's no one quite like him—honest and true to his word, totally devoted to God and hating evil." Satan retorted, "So do you think Job does all that out of the sheer goodness of his heart? Why, no one ever had it so good! You pamper him like a pet, make sure nothing bad ever happens to him or his family or his possessions, bless everything he does—he can't lose! But what do you think would happen if you reached down and took away everything that is his? He'd curse you right to your face, that's what." God replied, "We'll see. Go ahead—do what you want with all that is his. Just don't hurt him." Then Satan left the presence of God.

Sometime later, while Job's children were having one of their parties at the home of the oldest son, a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys grazing in the field next to us when Sabeans attacked. They stole the animals and killed the field hands. I'm the only one to get out alive and tell you what happened." While he was still talking, another messenger arrived and said, "Bolts of lightning struck the sheep and the shepherds and fried them—burned them to a crisp. I'm the only one to get out alive and tell you what happened." While he was still talking, another messenger arrived and said, "Chaldeans coming from three directions raided the camels

and massacred the camel drivers. I'm the only one to get out alive and tell you what happened." While he was still talking, another messenger arrived and said, "Your children were having a party at the home of the oldest brother when a tornado swept in off the desert and struck the house. It collapsed on the young people and they died. I'm the only one to get out alive and tell you what happened."

Job got to his feet, ripped his robe, shaved his head, then fell to the ground and worshiped: Naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I'll return to the womb of the earth. God gives, God takes. God's name be ever blessed. Not once through all this did Job sin; not once did he blame God.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Jesus Has the Power to Provide Whatever is Necessary: *"Then Jesus took the bread and, having given thanks, gave it to those who were seated. He did the same with the fish. All ate as much as they wanted." John 6:11*

SUSTENANCE

Endless Resources

John 6 (The Msg)

Feeding Five Thousand

After this, Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee. A huge crowd followed him, attracted by the miracles they had seen him do among the sick. When he got to the other side, he climbed a hill and sat down, surrounded by his disciples. It was nearly time for the Feast of Passover, kept annually by the Jews. When Jesus looked out and saw that a large crowd had arrived, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy bread to feed these people?" He said this to stretch Philip's faith. He already knew what he was going to do. Philip answered, "Two hundred silver pieces wouldn't be enough to buy bread for each person to get a piece." One of the disciples—it was Andrew, brother to Simon Peter—said, "There's a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But that's a drop in the bucket for a crowd like this."

Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." There was a nice carpet of green grass in this place. They sat down, about five thousand of them. Then Jesus took the bread and, having given thanks, gave it to those

who were seated. He did the same with the fish. All ate as much as they wanted. When the people had eaten their fill, he said to his disciples, "Gather the leftovers so nothing is wasted." They went to work and filled twelve large baskets with leftovers from the five barley loaves.

The next day the crowd that was left behind realized that there had been only one boat, and that Jesus had not gotten into it with his disciples. They had seen them go off without him. By now boats from Tiberias had pulled up near where they had eaten the bread blessed by the Master. So when the crowd realized he was gone and wasn't coming back, they piled into the Tiberias boats and headed for Capernaum, looking for Jesus.

When they found him back across the sea, they said, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered, "You've come looking for me not because you saw God in my actions but because I fed you, filled your stomachs—and for free. Don't waste your energy striving for perishable food like that. Work for the food that sticks with you, food that nourishes your lasting life, food the Son of Man provides. He and what he does are guaranteed by God the Father to last."

To that they said, "Well, what do we do then to get in on God's works?" Jesus said, "Throw your lot in with the One that God has sent. That kind of a commitment gets you in on God's works." They waffled: "Why don't you give us a clue about who you are, just a hint of what's going on? When we see what's up, we'll commit ourselves. Show us

what you can do. Moses fed our ancestors with bread in the desert. It says so in the Scriptures: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' "

Jesus responded, "The real significance of that Scripture is not that Moses gave you bread from heaven but that my Father is right now offering you bread from heaven, the real bread. The Bread of God came down out of heaven and is giving life to the world."

They jumped at that: "Master, give us this bread, now and forever!" Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life. The person who aligns with me hungers no more and thirsts no more, ever."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

From the Early Patriarchs to the Present, God Has Encouraged Unity: *"Worship God in peace, stay united and be guided by the Holy Spirit. Remember that there is only one body of Christ and one Holy Spirit who gives us all the same hope." Ephesians 4:4*

SYNERGY

Cooperation in the Midst of Schism

Ephesians 4 (CW)

Unity in the Body

My appeal to you is to prove yourselves worthy of being called Christians, even though what I'm telling you has put me in jail. Be humble, patient and gentle with each other, showing tolerance and love. Worship God in peace, stay united and be guided by the Holy Spirit. Remember that there is only one body of Christ and one Holy Spirit who gives us all the same hope. There is only one Lord, one faith and one baptism. There is only one God and Father of us all, who is over all His people and in all His people. That's what makes us brothers and sisters.

Then there are God's gifts of grace which Christ has given to us. As it says in the Psalms: "Gifts will be given to Him to give us after He ascends to heaven. He will take with Him those who are raised from the dead at the time of His own resurrection. These will be living trophies of His victory over sin and death." If He ascended to heaven, then that proves that He came down from heaven to become one of us. He

who became one of us has ascended and been given a place next to God who has put Him in charge of everything in heaven and on earth.

Christ through the Holy Spirit gave us the gifts that God determined. Some were gifted to be apostles, others to function as prophets, still others to be evangelists and others to be pastors or teachers. These are only a few of the many gifts God has given to equip the church to carry out its mission.

The gifts are to help us press together, to treasure our mutual faith and to grow up into mature believers, becoming more and more like Christ. These gifts will lift us out of our childish impulsiveness and keep us from being tossed back and forth like a cork on the waves of the sea, or from being spun around by every wind of doctrine that comes along. There will always be crafty people who will cleverly attempt to undermine the truth just to get a following. But we have spoken the truth in love which will keep you growing more and more like Him in every way. The truth about our God and His Son is what holds us together. We're Christ's body, which is only as strong and healthy as the individual muscles and sinews. God wants each part to do its work so the church can grow and build itself up in love. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I appeal to you not to live as those Gentiles do who have different values and a completely different view of things. Their minds are darkened and they're alienated from God because of their ignorance, which is due to the hardness of their hearts.

They've become calloused, living lives of sensuality, and indulging in undisciplined passions while continually lusting for more.

This is totally different from the kind of lives I've taught you to live or from the devoted life to God that Christ lived. If you've been taught how to live in accordance with the truth as it is in Jesus, then put off the old self which is corrupt and deceitful and full of lust. Determine to live totally for Him. Begin each day with a commitment to live for Christ.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

The Young Christ Knew How to Integrate Faith and Learning: *"It's the wisdom of God that's important, and it's this wisdom that sounds strange and illogical to the secular mind." 1 Corinthians 2:13*

TEACHING

Tremendous Teaching Techniques

1 Corinthians 2 (CW)

Spiritual Teachers

My brothers, when I came to your city, I didn't come to attract you by my oratory or intellect as I shared with you the mystery of God's plan of salvation. I determined not to talk about anything with you except Jesus Christ and His crucifixion. I came to you as one who was weak because I was afraid that if I came on strong you would focus on me and not on Jesus Christ. So I didn't use flowery words or apply psychology to you but allowed the Holy Spirit to do His mighty work, so no one could say it was my influence that did it. That way your faith was not anchored in the logic of men but in the power of God!

Those who are spiritually mature will recognize the wisdom of that. True, that's not the way leaders usually do things, those rulers whose kingdoms will one day pass away. It's the wisdom of God that's important, and it's this wisdom that sounds strange and illogical to the secu-

lar mind. But God intended to share this wisdom with us for our glory before time began.

This is the wisdom that statesmen and scholars of our day didn't understand. If they had, they wouldn't have crucified the Lord Jesus Christ as they did. That's why the Scriptures say, "The eyes of man can't see, his ears can't hear and his mind can't imagine what God has in mind to do for those who love Him."

But God has revealed His plans for us in the Scriptures. And if there's anyone who can read the mind of God and know the way God thinks, it's the Holy Spirit who gave us the Scriptures. Which one of us can know what another man is thinking? Only the man himself knows that. No one can know what God is thinking or how He thinks except God Himself. But the Holy Spirit is also God, and He has told us what we know about our God.

What we have shared with you is not based on worldly wisdom but on what the Holy Spirit said, that we might understand and recognize the gifts He has so freely given us. We have shared with you what we were told, not based on man's ideas but on what the Holy Spirit said. He expresses spiritual truths so that anyone can understand who asks Him for help.

Most people are not interested in what God is trying to tell them. It doesn't make sense to them and it seems foolish because it can be understood only under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Those who are spiritual are given the ability to understand and evaluate spiritual

things. But by nature the secular man can't understand the spiritually minded man's way of looking at such things. As the Scriptures say, "Who can know the mind of the Lord to evaluate Him?" No one! Yet the Holy Spirit has helped us to understand the will of God for us through Christ.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Jeremiah Laments Over Jerusalem: *"Oh, how well I remember—the feeling of hitting the bottom. But there's one other thing I remember, and remembering, I keep a grip on hope: God's loyal love couldn't have run out, his merciful love couldn't have dried up. They're created new every morning. How great your faithfulness!" Lamentations 3:22*

TEARS

Tears, Tragedy and a Lost City

Lamentations 3 (The Msg)

Sorrow Over Jerusalem

I'm the man who has seen trouble, trouble coming from the lash of God's anger. He took me by the hand and walked me into pitch-black darkness. Yes, he's given me the back of his hand over and over and over again. He turned me into a scarecrow of skin and bones, then broke the bones. He hemmed me in, ganged up on me, poured on the trouble and hard times. He locked me up in deep darkness, like a corpse nailed inside a coffin. He shuts me in so I'll never get out, manacles my hands, shackles my feet.

Even when I cry out and plead for help, he locks up my prayers and throws away the key. He sets up blockades with quarried limestone. He's got me cornered. He's a prowling bear tracking me down, a lion in hiding ready to pounce. He knocked me from the path and ripped me to pieces. When he finished, there was nothing left of me. He took out his bow and arrows and used me for target practice. He shot me in the stomach with arrows from his quiver.

Everyone took me for a joke, made me the butt of their mocking ballads. He forced rotten, stinking food down my throat, bloated me with vile drinks. He ground my face into the gravel. He pounded me into the mud.

I gave up on life altogether. I've forgotten what the good life is like. I said to myself, "This is it. I'm finished. God is a lost cause." I'll never forget the trouble, the utter lostness, the taste of ashes, the poison I've swallowed. I remember it all— Oh, how well I remember—the feeling of hitting the bottom. But there's one other thing I remember, and remembering, I keep a grip on hope: God's loyal love couldn't have run out, his merciful love couldn't have dried up. They're created new every morning. How great your faithfulness!

I'm sticking with God (I say it over and over). He's all I've got left. God proves to be good to the man who passionately waits, to the woman who diligently seeks. It's a good thing to quietly hope, quietly hope for help from God. It's a good thing when you're young to stick it out through the hard times.

When life is heavy and hard to take, go off by yourself. Enter the silence. Bow in prayer. Don't ask questions: Wait for hope to appear. Don't run from trouble. Take it full-face. The "worst" is never the worst. Why? Because the Master won't ever walk out and fail to return. If he works severely, he also works tenderly. His stockpiles of loyal love are immense. He takes no pleasure in making life hard, in throwing road-blocks in the way: Stomping down hard on luckless prisoners, Refusing

justice to victims in the court of High God, Tampering with evidence—the Master does not approve of such things.

Who do you think "spoke and it happened"? It's the Master who gives such orders. Doesn't the High God speak everything, good things and hard things alike, into being? And why would anyone gifted with life complain when punished for sin? Let's take a good look at the way we're living and reorder our lives under God.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Timing is Timeless–Knowing What to Do and When to Do It–is Wisdom: *"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot." Ecclesiastes 3:1*

TIME

Accepting the Realities of Time

Ecclesiastes 3 (NIV)

Solomon on Time

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That every-

one may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil–this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him.

Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before; and God will call the past to account. And I saw something else under the sun. In the place of judgment–wickedness was there, in the place of justice–wickedness was there. I thought in my heart, "God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed."

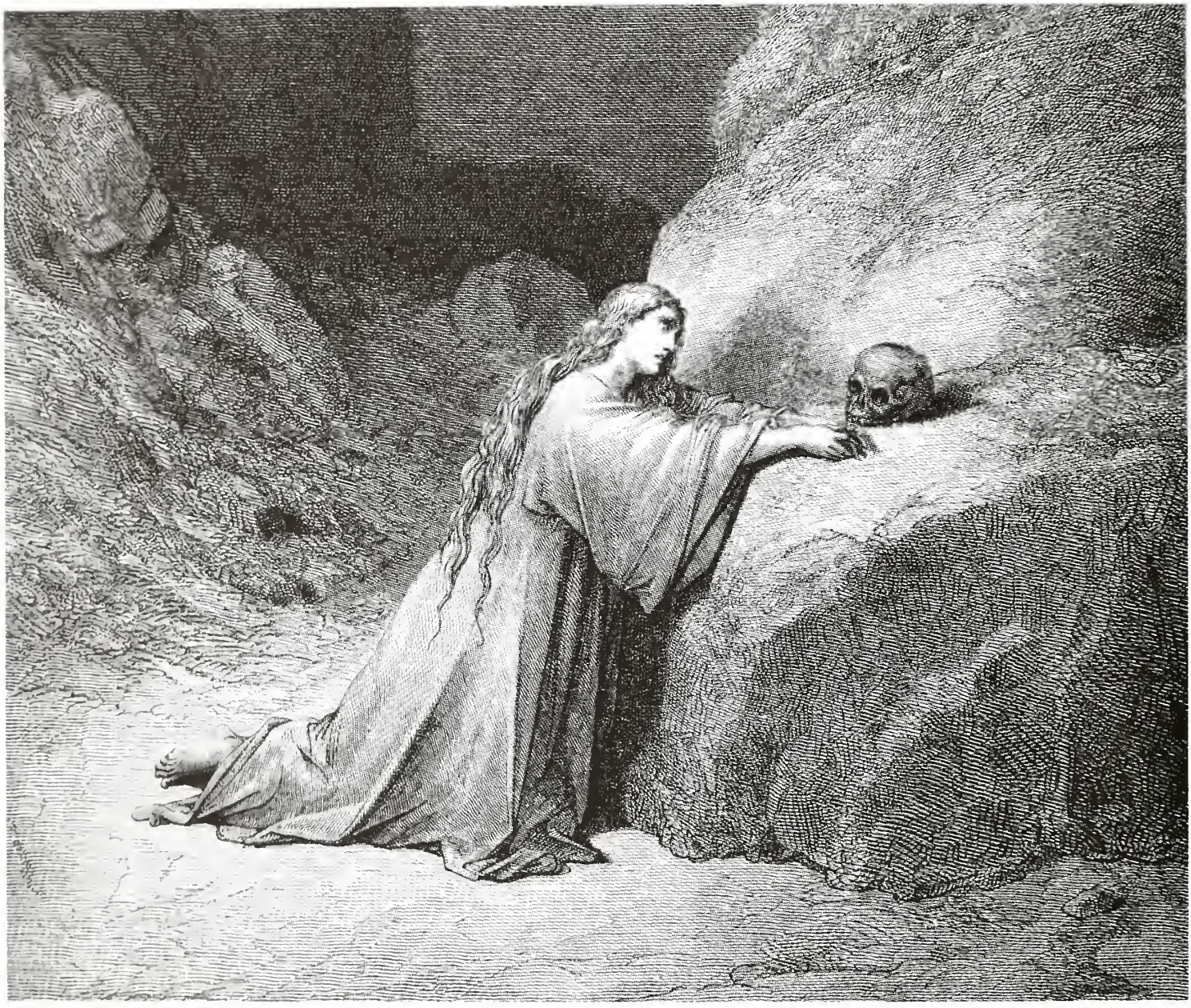
So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

The man who makes no mistakes does not normally make anything.

Unknown



Sorrow and Confession are the Pathways to Oneness with God: *"I said to myself, 'I will acknowledge my sins and transgressions to the Lord and ask Him for forgiveness.' And you forgave me and took away my load of guilt." Psalm 32:5*

TRUE CONFESSION

A Model of True Confession and Forgiveness

Psalm 32 (CW)

Confession and Forgiveness

Happy is the man who knows that his sins are forgiven and that his mistakes will not be mentioned. Happy is the man whose wrongs the Lord does not hold against him and who is accepted as if he had never sinned. When I kept my sin to myself, I seemed to grow old; all day long my heart groaned inside of me. Day and night I was under conviction, and my strength slipped away as if it were a hot summer day.

Then I decided to confess my sin to you and right what was wrong. I said to myself, "I will acknowledge my sins and transgressions to the Lord and ask Him for forgiveness." And you forgave me and took away my load of guilt.

Everyone should pray to you in times of need; when trouble rushes in like a flood, it will not reach them. You are my hiding place, O Lord. You are the One who will protect me from trouble; you will put a song in my heart as I sing of your deliverance. You have said, "I will teach you the way that you should go, and I will keep my eye on you and guide you along safe paths."

Help us not to act like a bucking horse or a stubborn mule which has to be controlled by a bit and bridle to make it stay in the way. The wicked bring suffering on themselves because of their stubbornness, but those who trust in the Lord are surrounded by His constant love.

So rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you who obey him, because the Lord loves you! Shout to the Lord for joy!

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

A man is not finished when he is defeated. He is finished when he quits.

True Fasts are More Than Not Eating–It's About a Life of Mercy, Justice, and Goodness: *"This is the kind of fast day I'm after: to break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation in the workplace, free the oppressed, cancel debts. What I'm interested in seeing you do is: sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad, being available to your own families." Isaiah 58:6*

TRUE FASTING

Figuring Out True Fasting

Isaiah 58 (The Msg)

Fasting and the Sabbath

"Shout! A full-throated shout! Hold nothing back—a trumpet-blast shout! Tell my people what's wrong with their lives, face my family Jacob with their sins! They're busy, busy, busy at worship, and love studying all about me. To all appearances they're a nation of right-living people—law-abiding, God-honoring.

They ask me, 'What's the right thing to do?' and love having me on their side. But they also complain, 'Why do we fast and you don't look our way? Why do we humble ourselves and you don't even notice?' Well, here's why: The bottom line on your 'fast days' is profit. You drive your employees much too hard. You fast, but at the same time you bicker and fight. You fast, but you swing a mean fist.

The kind of fasting you do won't get your prayers off the ground. Do you think this is the kind of fast day I'm after: a day to show off humility? To put on a pious long face and parade around solemnly in black? Do you call that fasting, a fast day that I, God, would like? This

is the kind of fast day I'm after: to break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation in the workplace, free the oppressed, cancel debts. What I'm interested in seeing you do is: sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad, being available to your own families.

Do this and the lights will turn on, and your lives will turn around at once. Your righteousness will pave your way. The God of glory will secure your passage. Then when you pray, God will answer. You'll call out for help and I'll say, 'Here I am.'"

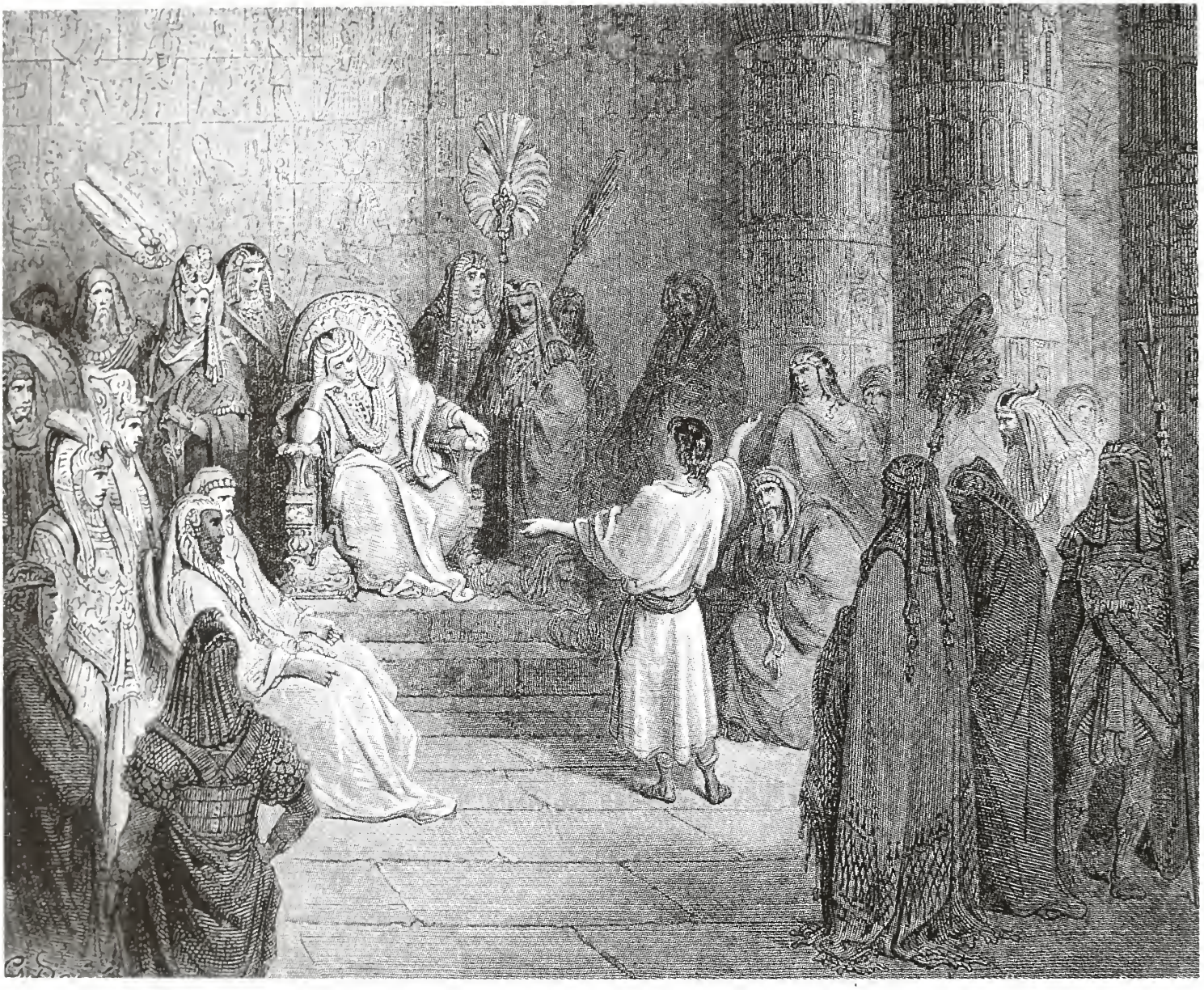
"If you get rid of unfair practices, quit blaming victims, quit gossiping about other people's sins, If you are generous with the hungry and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out, Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness, your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight. I will always show you where to go. I'll give you a full life in the emptiest of places—firm muscles, strong bones. You'll be like a well-watered garden, a gurgling spring that never runs dry. You'll use the old rubble of past lives to build anew, rebuild the foundations from out of your past. You'll be known as those who can fix anything, restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate, make the community livable again.

"If you watch your step on the Sabbath and don't use my holy day for personal advantage, if you treat the Sabbath as a day of joy, God's holy day as a celebration, if you honor it by refusing 'business as usual,' making money, running here and there—then you'll be free to enjoy

God! Oh, I'll make you ride high and soar above it all. I'll make you feast on the inheritance of your ancestor Jacob." Yes! God says so!

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



Wisdom is Worth Any Sacrifice: *"Wisdom from above is more precious than rubies and nothing you desire compares with it. Wisdom holds out her right hand and offers a long and happy life, and in her left hand she offers riches and honor. Her ways are peaceful and her paths pleasant." Proverbs 3:15*

UNDERSTANDING WISDOM

Dissecting Wisdom's Infrastructure

Proverbs 3 (CW)

Acquiring Wisdom

My son, don't forget what I've told you; take my commandments seriously. Then you'll live a long and happy life, and success will be yours wherever you go. Don't let loyalty and faithfulness slip away from you. Hang them around your neck like ornaments and engrave them on your heart forever. When you do this, both God and man will be pleased and will favor you.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't depend on your own understanding. Put the Lord first in everything you do and He will direct your life. Don't think of yourself as being so wise. Respect the Lord, and stay away from wickedness. If you do this, it will bring health to your body and give strength to your bones. Honor the Lord with

your wealth and give Him the first of your harvest. Then He will bless you, and soon your barns will overflow and your grape presses will be full.

My son, don't reject the discipline of the Lord or resent being reproved by Him. The Lord takes pains to discipline those He loves, just as a loving father cares about what kind of a man his son will become. Happy is the man who finds true wisdom and the man who grows in understanding. True wisdom is more profitable than silver and is better than the accumulation of gold.

Wisdom from above is more precious than rubies and nothing you desire compares with it. Wisdom holds out her right hand and offers a long and happy life, and in her left hand she offers riches and honor. Her ways are peaceful and her paths pleasant. She is like a tree of life to those who eat her fruit, and those who partake are gladdened and refreshed.

The Lord formed the earth with wisdom and stretched out the heavens with understanding. By His insight He divided the water vapors above from the water vapors below and allowed the dew to water the dry ground. My son, hold on to wisdom and sound judgment and never let them out of your sight. They will not only give life to you, but will be like precious jewels hung around your neck. Then you will walk through life in safety and your feet will know which way to go. When you go to bed at night, you won't be afraid; when you fall asleep, your rest will be sweet.

Don't be afraid of sudden disaster or fear the final destruction of the wicked. The Lord is your confidence, and He will keep you from slipping away from Him. Don't hold back from doing good when it is in your power to do so. Don't tell those who come to you for help, "not right now, but another time," just because it is inconvenient for you. Don't take advantage of your neighbor who lives next to you because he trusts you. Don't accuse people of things for no reason, especially if they have done you no wrong. Don't envy a violent man and don't do what he does. The Lord hates the actions of such men but is pleased with those who strive to live righteously.

The Lord cannot bless the homes of the wicked, but He abundantly blesses the homes of the righteous. The Lord is not pleased with scorners, but delights in giving grace to the humble. Those who are wise in the Lord, He will honor, but fools who feel no need of Him will be ashamed.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Unity, Fellowship, and Oneness Are Mighty Forces: *"So make me one with you again in the same way I was one with you before this world was ever created. I've lived out your life for all to see and have told these men, whom you chose to be my disciples, about you. They've obeyed your word. They know that whatever authority and power I have or whatever I've said has comes from you." John 17:5*

UNITY

The Unanswered Prayer of Christ

John 17 (CW)

Jesus on Being One

Then Jesus stopped, looked up to heaven and prayed, "Father, the hour has now come for you to honor me as your Son so that I may honor you as my Father. You have put the whole human race under my care and let me give eternal life to all who accept your love. And this is eternal life, to know you, the only true God, and to accept me, Jesus Christ, as your Son. This is the gift I have given them. I have honored you while I've lived here, and I've finished the work that you gave me to do. So make me one with you again in the same way I was one with you before this world was ever created. I've lived out your life for all to see and have told these men, whom you chose to be my disciples, about you. They've obeyed your word. They know that whatever authority and power I have or whatever I've said has come from you. I've told them everything you told me to tell them. They've accepted it and know that I've come directly from you and that you were the One who sent me.

Father, I especially pray for them right now, not for the whole world. These are the men that you have chosen to be my disciples, so they are your disciples too. Actually, anyone who follows me belongs to you just as much as they belong to me. But these are the men who will give credibility to our mission.

In just a little while, I'll be leaving this world, but they'll still be here. Soon I'll be seeing you, but they'll be left alone. Holy Father, please watch over these men whom you've given to me, so that they may honor you by being one, just as you and I are one. All the time I've been here, I've watched over them and held them together for your sake. I haven't lost one of them, except Judas who chose to betray me, and you had told me that he would do this. So now I'm ready to come home again.

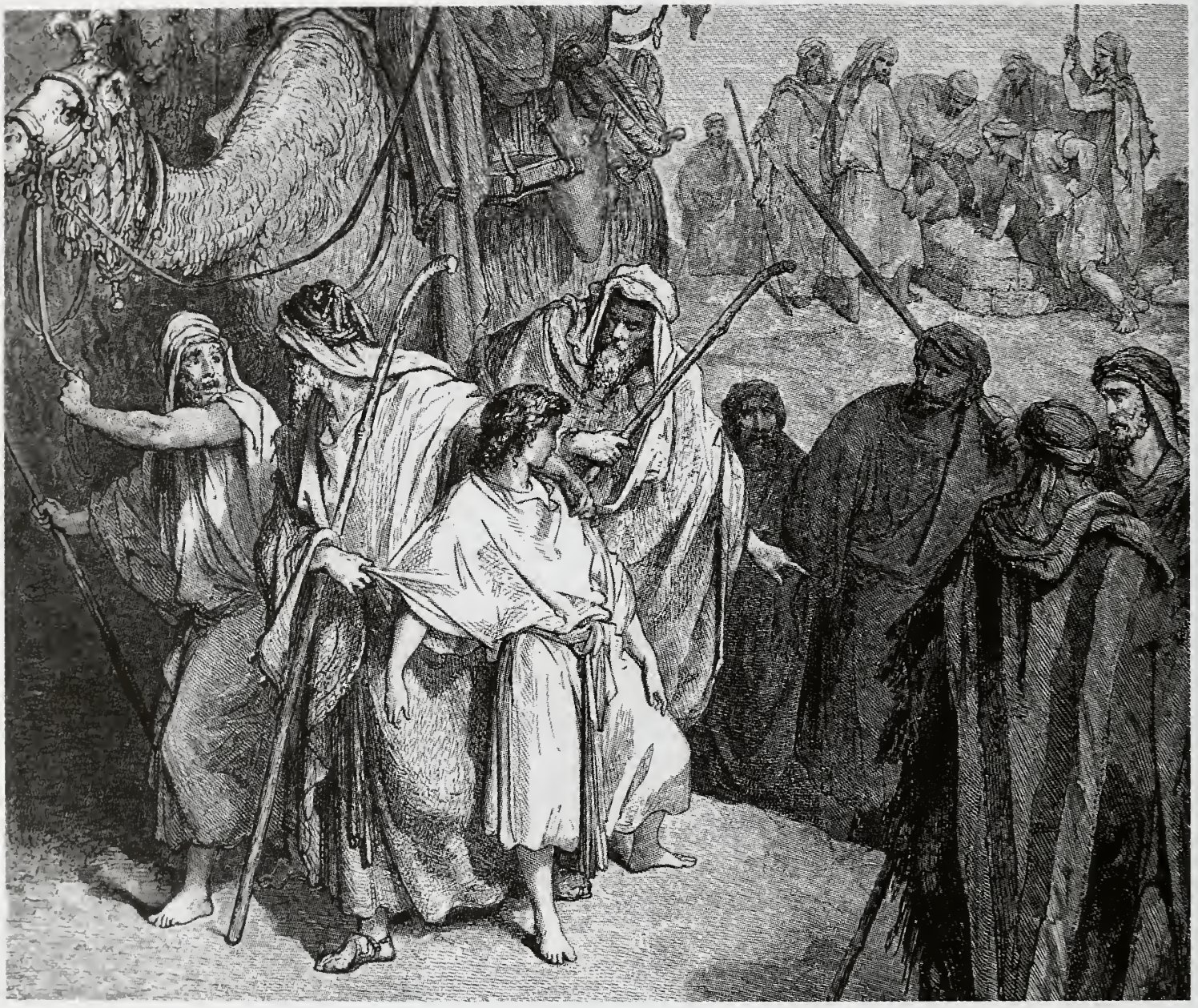
I've told these men everything that will happen and that they'll soon experience the same joyous relationship with you that I've always had. I've sent them out to tell others the good news about you, so they've experienced what it means to be rejected, just as I have because I don't have the same spirit the world has. I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil that's in the world. They don't really belong in this world any more than I do. Help them to be holy men through your truth.

The truth about you is found in your word which they have in Scripture. I'm sending them into the world to tell others about you, just as you sent me into the world to tell them about you. I set myself whol-

ly apart for you and gave them an example of what they should do. Father, I'm not praying just for these men, but for all those who will become my disciples through what these men will say and do. That's why it's so important that they have the same spirit and be one, just as you and I are one. Then they'll be one with us, and the world will be able to see what my mission was all about and believe that you really sent me.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?



When Sold into Slavery All Seemed Lost to Joseph, but God Turned Things Around: *"When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny." Psalm 73:17*

UNIVERSAL EQUITY

Achieving Clarity on Spiritual Realities

Psalm 73 (NIV)

David on God's Ultimate Fairness

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits. They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression. Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. They say, "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?"

This is what the wicked are like–always carefree, they increase in

wealth. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning.

If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed your children. When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies.

When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you. But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

Never cease loving a person, and never give up hope for him, for even the prodigal son who had fallen most low could still be saved; the bitterest enemy and also he who was your friend could again be your friend; love that has grown cold can kindle again.

Soren Kierkegaard

Samuel's Long and Productive Ministry Began When He Heard the Voice of God:
"Then God came and stood before him exactly as before, calling out, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Samuel answered, 'Speak. I'm your servant, ready to listen.'" 1 Samuel 3:10

WILL OF GOD

How to Understand the Voice of God

1 Samuel 3 (The Msg)

Samuel's Call From God

The boy Samuel was serving God under Eli's direction. This was at a time when the revelation of God was rarely heard or seen. One night Eli was sound asleep (his eyesight was very bad—he could hardly see). It was well before dawn; the sanctuary lamp was still burning. Samuel was still in bed in the Temple of God, where the Chest of God rested.

Then God called out, "Samuel, Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Yes? I'm here." Then he ran to Eli saying, "I heard you call. Here I am." Eli said, "I didn't call you. Go back to bed." And so he did. God called again, "Samuel, Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, "I heard you call. Here I am." Again Eli said, "Son, I didn't call you. Go back to bed." (This all happened before Samuel knew God for himself. It was before the revelation of God had been given to him personally.)

God called again, "Samuel!"—the third time! Yet again Samuel got up and went to Eli, "Yes? I heard you call me. Here I am." That's when it dawned on Eli that God was calling the boy. So Eli directed Samuel, "Go back and lie down. If the voice calls again, say, 'Speak, God. I'm your servant, ready to listen.'" Samuel returned to his bed. Then God came and stood before him exactly as before, calling out, "Samuel! Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Speak. I'm your servant, ready to listen."

God said to Samuel, "Listen carefully. I'm getting ready to do something in Israel that is going to shake everyone up and get their attention. The time has come for me to bring down on Eli's family everything I warned him of, every last word of it. I'm letting him know that the time's up. I'm bringing judgment on his family for good. He knew what was going on, that his sons were desecrating God's name and God's place, and he did nothing to stop them.

This is my sentence on the family of Eli: The evil of Eli's family can never be wiped out by sacrifice or offering." Samuel stayed in bed until morning, then rose early and went about his duties, opening the doors of the sanctuary, but he dreaded having to tell the vision to Eli. But then Eli summoned Samuel: "Samuel, my son!" Samuel came running: "Yes? What can I do for you?" "What did he say? Tell it to me, all of it. Don't suppress or soften one word, as God is your judge! I want it all, word for word as he said it to you."

So Samuel told him, word for word. He held back nothing. Eli said, "He is God. Let him do whatever he thinks best." Samuel grew up. God

was with him, and Samuel's prophetic record was flawless. Everyone in Israel, from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south, recognized that Samuel was the real thing—a true prophet of God. God continued to show up at Shiloh, revealed through his word to Samuel at Shiloh.

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

God's Law is a Reflection of His Will for His People: *"You are to respect the Lord your God and show it by obeying Him. Then things will go well with you and with your children in the land where you're going and you'll enjoy a long, happy life."*
Deuteronomy 6:2

WORD OF GOD

God's Word is Pervasive

Deuteronomy 6 (CW)

Written Revelation of God

You are to respect the Lord your God and show it by obeying Him. Then things will go well with you and with your children in the land where you're going and you'll enjoy a long, happy life. So listen carefully to what I have to say, and do what the Lord has asked you to do. Then all His blessings will be yours, and you will become a mighty nation with fertile fields and rich harvests just as the God of our fathers promised you. Listen to me, Israel! The Lord our God is one God! So love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your mind and your strength. Remember these commands of the Lord as long as you live. Keep them because you love your God.

Teach your children to love the Lord by obeying Him. Talk to them about Him whether you're at home or traveling with them, in the morning and in the evening. Do whatever you need to do so as not to forget what the Lord has said, even if you have to write it on the backs of your hands or on your forehead, on the doors of your houses or on your fence posts and gates.

So when you have eaten and feel satisfied, don't forget the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt and slavery. Never lose your reverence and respect for the Lord. He is your God. Serve only Him. If you ever have to take an oath, take it only in His name. Don't get caught up in worshiping the gods and things that the people around you worship. The Lord your God is a jealous God; He is jealous for your good. So He will discipline you when necessary. If nothing else works, He will let your enemies conquer and seemingly destroy you. Don't test Him to see how far you can go or what you can get away with. Don't do as you did at Massah where you doubted His presence when you needed water. Be sure to faithfully obey the commandments of the Lord and pay attention to the instructions He has given you. Do what is right and good in the Lord's sight and all will go well with you. You will be able to go in and possess the land that the Lord promised you. You'll defeat your enemies as the Lord has said you would."

APPLICATION

What personal life principle did I derive from this reading?

There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scriptures. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If God's word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose rarely seen in these times.

Ellen G. White

APPENDIX

- What the Bible Will Do For You..... 498
- ABCs of Bible Reading (Psalm 119)..... 501
- Nine Characteristics of a Highly Effective Devotional Life... 518
- Seven Secrets on How to Dig Deeper in God's Word..... 524
- Seven Steps for Memorizing Scriptures..... 525
- Fifteen Reasons to Read the Psalms..... 527
- Bible Facts and Stats..... 528
- Online Bible Study Resources..... 531
- 52-Week Bible Reading Plan..... 532

WHAT THE BIBLE WILL DO FOR YOU

IT . . .

1. Provides Direction
2. Reveals Motives
3. Establishes Role Models
4. Builds Faith
5. Changes Lives
6. Encourages Love
7. Affirms Diversity
8. Resolves Conflicts
9. Inspires Exploits
10. Elevates Integrity
11. Unites Families
12. Teaches Truth
13. Transforms Character
14. Quiets Fear
15. Offers Hope

16. Provides Solutions
17. Initiates Change
18. Solves Problems
19. Reveals Events to Come
20. Comforts Hurts
21. Creates Hope
22. Prepares Believers for Eternity
23. Opens Adventure
24. Puts Truth in Your Heart
25. Instills Visions of Heaven in the Mind
26. Engenders Joy
27. Thwarts Discouragement
28. Facilitates Health
29. Bonds Friends
30. Weeds Out Sin
31. Calms Emotions

God gives sufficient evidence to every soul. He does not promise to remove every doubt, but He gives a reason for faith.

Ellen G. White

ABC'S OF BIBLE READING: 26 POWERFUL CHALLENGES

Taken from Psalm 119 and Related Bible Passages

Psalm 119 is an incredible Bible passage. In fact, it is one of the most helpful and complete portions of Scripture in that it practically lays out the benefits of Bible study and the application of the Word to life. Here are just a few of the fascinating features of Psalm 119. It consists of 176 verses arranged in 22 stanzas. Each stanza contains eight verses. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet and the author has beautifully composed the psalm as a specific acrostic where each stanza corresponds to a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There is much debate over who actually wrote Psalm 119. People commonly believe the author was David, others say it was Ezra, and then still others say that the content and outcomes suggest that Daniel wrote it. We do know that it was inspired by the Holy Spirit and is the finest Bible literature found anywhere.

It is suggested that the author deliberately wrote Psalm 119 in a way that made it easier to memorize. Further, it seems that the writer wanted to artistically communicate the completeness of his belief that Bible study is one of the most fulfilling activities in life. In other words, Psalm 119 was designed to communicate from "A to Z" on the topic of God's Word. It is in this spirit that we

have taken the 22 sections of Psalm 119 and given them a relevant section heading that corresponds to the section content and the 26 English alphabets–literally A to Z. We also added an interactive application question or assignment at the end of each section for your enrichment. Please take time to respond. You will be blessed.

Here are five tips on how to benefit from Psalm 119 and the other readings in this book.

FIRST, PRAY OVER IT SINCERELY. As you come to the reading of the Bible, remember you are reading the most meaningful material available. You are reading the Word of God. This is God's love letter to you and you want to be in the state of mind to receive and appreciate what God will share with you. Ask Him to be with you and reveal His thoughts to you. He has a message to you in every passage if you will take the time and receive it.

SECOND, READ IT REGULARLY. The Word must be ingested to be digested. Read and re-read it silently or out loud, but you must read and think about the passages in order for the Word to impact your heart. Use the passages in devotion with a friend, family member or devotional partner.

THIRD, MEDITATE ON IT CAREFULLY. You have to go beyond mere reading for the passages to have the intended effect. Read, explain it to yourself, apply it to your life and then think and plan how to implement the principles in your life. Feel free to use commentaries, the Spirit of Prophecy books by Ellen G. White, and Charles Spurgeon's classic Treasury of David (the entire volume can be found online). Be sure to keep a highliter handy to emphasize meaningful sections and make notes of your thoughts for future reflection.

Fourth, apply it personally. The goal of Bible study is genuine life change. In order for that change to take place you have to be a doer and not simply a hearer of the principles of the Word. That means that as you read you have to choose to conform your life to the Word. It would be tragic to read and meditate on the Word and then come away unchanged. One way to positively change is to pray, intend, and then implement the ideals, values, and principles in your life. Establish some type of appropriate accountability to a friend or loved one who can observe changes in your life. Change won't happen by accident, it must be intentional.

Fifth, memorize it diligently. Most people find the idea of memorizing Bible passages frightening. It doesn't have to be. Begin by memorizing small portions and then move to larger portions. You will be amazed at how your memory and retention will improve. I know this sounds like a tall order, but is it possible that you could choose to memorize the entire Psalm 119 and/or other portions in this QuoteBook. John Ruskin, English writer, art critic and reformer reflected on how his mother taught him to memorize Scripture when a boy. One of the chapters she helped him memorize was Psalm 119. Later in his life he said, "It is strange that of all the pieces of the Bible which my mother taught me, that which cost me most to learn, and which was to my childish mind, chiefly repulsive—the 119th Psalm—has now become of all the most precious to me in its overflowing and glorious passion of love for the Law of God." Try it, persist, and ask God to bless your efforts. You will be amazed at what will happen!

26 Challenges from A-Z

A–ACCEPT GOD'S DIRECTIONS (ALEPH: 1-8)

You're blessed when you stay on course, walking steadily on the road revealed by God. You're blessed when you follow his directions, doing your best to find him. That's right—you don't go off on your own; you walk straight along the road he set. You, God, prescribed the right way to live; now you expect us to live it. Oh, that my steps might be steady, keeping to the course you set; Then I'd never have any regrets in comparing my life with your counsel. I thank you for speaking straight from your heart; I learn the pattern of your righteous ways. I'm going to do what you tell me to do; don't ever walk off and leave me.

What areas in my life need to be redirected or changed?

B–BELIEVE GOD'S PROMISE (BETH: 9-16)

How can a young person live a clean life? By carefully reading the map of your Word. I'm single-minded in pursuit of you; don't let me miss the road signs you've posted. I've banked your promises in the vault of my heart so I won't sin myself bankrupt. Be blessed, God; train me in your ways of wise living. I'll transfer to my lips all the counsel that comes from your mouth; I delight far more in what you tell me about living than in gathering a pile of riches. I ponder every morsel of wisdom from you, I attentively watch how you've done it. I relish everything you've told me of life, I won't forget a word of it.

What are simple ways I can increase or nurture belief in God's promises?

C–Concede to God's Counsel (Gimel: 17-24)

Be generous with me and I'll live a full life; not for a minute will I take my eyes off your road. Open my eyes so I can see what you show me of your miracle-wonders. I'm a stranger in these parts; give me clear directions. My soul is starved and hungry, ravenous!—insatiable for your nourishing commands. And those who think they know so much, ignoring everything you tell them—let them have it! Don't let them mock and humiliate me; I've been careful to do just what you said. While bad neighbors maliciously gossip about me, I'm absorbed in pondering your wise counsel. Yes, your sayings on life are what give me delight; I listen to them as to good neighbors!

What can I do to personally implement God's counsel–how can I translate thought into acts?

D–Deepen Faith in God's Future Plan (Daleth: 25-32)

I'm feeling terrible—I couldn't feel worse! Get me on my feet again. You promised, remember?

When I told my story, you responded; train me well in your deep wisdom. Help me understand these things inside and out so I can ponder your miracle-wonders. My sad life's dilapidated, a falling-down barn; build me up again by your Word. Barricade the road that goes Nowhere; grace me with your clear revelation. I choose the true road to Somewhere, I post your road signs at every curve and corner. I grasp and cling to whatever you tell me; God, don't let me down! I'll run the course you lay out for me if you'll just show me how.

According to the Word, what will happen if I follow God's plan for my life?

E–EXCEL WITH DIVINE OUTCOMES (HE: 33-40)

God, teach me lessons for living so I can stay the course. Give me insight so I can do what you tell me—my whole life one long, obedient response. Guide me down the road of your commandments; I love traveling this freeway! Give me a bent for your words of wisdom, and not for piling up loot. Divert my eyes from toys and trinkets, invigorate me on the pilgrim way. Affirm your promises to me—promises made to all who fear you. Deflect the harsh words of my critics—but what you say is always so good. See how hungry I am for your counsel; preserve my life through your righteous ways!

What does "one long obedient response" mean to me–what is the promised outcome?

F–FACILITATE GOD'S LOVE THROUGH TRUST (WAW: 41-48)

Let your love, God, shape my life with salvation, exactly as you promised; Then I'll be able to stand up to mockery because I trusted your Word. Don't ever deprive me of truth, not ever—your commandments are what I depend on. Oh, I'll guard with my life what you've revealed to me, guard it now, guard it ever; And I'll stride freely through wide open spaces as I look for your truth and your wisdom; Then I'll tell the world what I find, speak out boldly in public, unembarrassed. I cherish your commandments—oh, how I love them!—relishing every fragment of your counsel.

Trust deepens faith and love–what can I do to facilitate the process in my life?

G–Gather God's Principles (Zayin: 49-56)

Remember what you said to me, your servant—I hang on to these words for dear life! These words hold me up in bad times; yes, your promises rejuvenate me. The insolent ridicule me without mercy, but I don't budge from your revelation. I watch for your ancient landmark words, and know I'm on the right track. But when I see the wicked ignore your directions, I'm beside myself with anger. I set your instructions to music and sing them as I walk this pilgrim way. I meditate on your name all night, God, treasuring your revelation, O God. Still, I walk through a rain of derision because I live by your Word and counsel.

What are three guiding principles of the Word that I value in my life?

H–Highly Prioritize Obedience to God's Truths (Heth: 57-64)

Because you have satisfied me, God, I promise to do everything you say. I beg you from the bottom of my heart: smile, be gracious to me just as you promised. When I took a long, careful look at your ways, I got my feet back on the trail you blazed. I was up at once, didn't drag my feet, was quick to follow your orders. The wicked hemmed me in—there was no way out—but not for a minute did I forget your plan for me. I get up in the middle of the night to thank you; your decisions are so right, so true—I can't wait till morning! I'm a friend and companion of all who fear you, of those committed to living by your rules. Your love, God, fills the earth! Train me to live by your counsel.

Why should God's Word be a priority in my life? List three reasons.

I–Initiate Exploration of God's Word (Teth: 65-72)

Be good to your servant, God; be as good as your Word. Train me in good common sense; I'm thoroughly committed to living your way. Before I learned to answer you, I wandered all over the place, but now I'm in step with your Word. You are good, and the source of good; train me in your goodness. The godless spread lies about me, but I focus my attention on what you are saying; They're bland as a bucket of lard, while I dance to the tune of your revelation. My troubles turned out all for the best—they forced me to learn from your textbook. Truth from your mouth means more to me than striking it rich in a gold mine.

Initiate a strategy to study a Bible topic of relevance to my life plans.

J–Join God's Group of Heroes (Yodh: 73-80)

With your very own hands you formed me; now breathe your wisdom over me so I can understand you. When they see me waiting, expecting your Word, those who fear you will take heart and be glad. I can see now, God, that your decisions are right; your testing has taught me what's true and right. Oh, love me—and right now!—hold me tight! just the way you promised. Now comfort me so I can live, really live; your revelation is the tune I dance to. Let the fast-talking tricksters be exposed as frauds; they tried to sell me a bill of goods, but I kept my mind fixed on your counsel. Let those who fear you turn to me for evidence of your wise guidance. And let me live whole and holy, soul and body, so I can always walk with my head held high.

How can I become a part of God's select group of heroes?

K–Keep a God Action Journal Book (Kaph: 81-88)

I'm homesick—longing for your salvation; I'm waiting for your word of hope. My eyes grow heavy watching for some sign of your promise; how long must I wait for your comfort? There's smoke in my eyes—they burn and water, but I keep a steady gaze on the instructions you post. How long do I have to put up with all this? How long till you haul my tormentors into court? The arrogant godless try to throw me off track, ignorant as they are of God and his ways. Everything you command is a sure thing, but they harass me with lies. Help! They've pushed and pushed—they never let up—but I haven't relaxed my grip on your counsel. In your great love revive me so I can alertly obey your every word.

Where have I seen evidence of God moving in my life? Make a list.

L–Log on to God's Revelations (Lamedh: 89-96)

What you say goes, God, and stays, as permanent as the heavens. Your truth never goes out of fashion; it's as up-to-date as the earth when the sun comes up. Your Word and truth are dependable as ever; that's what you ordered—you set the earth going. If your revelation hadn't delighted me so, I would have given up when the hard times came. But I'll never forget the advice you gave me; you saved my life with those wise words. Save me! I'm all yours. I look high and low for your words of wisdom. The wicked lie in ambush to destroy me, but I'm only concerned with your plans for me. I see the limits to everything human, but the horizons can't contain your commands!

Become sensitive to God's revelations in the world. List and share them.

M–Memorize God's Word (Mem: 97-104)

Oh, how I love all you've revealed; I reverently ponder it all the day long. Your commands give me an edge on my enemies; they never become obsolete. I've even become smarter than my teachers since I've pondered and absorbed your counsel. I've become wiser than the wise old sages simply by doing what you tell me. I watch my step, avoiding the ditches and ruts of evil so I can spend all my time keeping your Word. I never make detours from the route you laid out; you gave me such good directions. Your words are so choice, so tasty; I prefer them to the best home cooking. With your instruction, I understand life; that's why I hate false propaganda.

Have I ever memorized Scripture in a consistent manner? Start today.

N–Never Swerve From the Revealed Will of God (Nun: 105-112)

By your words I can see where I'm going; they throw a beam of light on my dark path. I've committed myself and I'll never turn back from living by your righteous order. Everything's falling apart on me, God; put me together again with your Word. Festoon me with your finest sayings, God; teach me your holy rules. My life is as close as my own hands, but I don't forget what you have revealed. The wicked do their best to throw me off track, but I don't swerve an inch from your course. I inherited your book on living; it's mine forever—what a gift! And how happy it makes me! I concentrate on doing exactly what you say—I always have and always will.

List three areas where I am tempted to deviate from God's will. How will I stay true?

O–Open my Eyes to Negative Idols and Idolaters (Samekh: 113-120)

I hate the two-faced, but I love your clear-cut revelation. You're my place of quiet retreat; I wait for your Word to renew me. Get out of my life, evildoers, so I can keep my God's commands. Take my side as you promised; I'll live then for sure. Don't disappoint all my grand hopes. Stick with me and I'll be all right; I'll give total allegiance to your definitions of life. Expose all who drift away from your sayings; their casual idolatry is lethal. You reject earth's wicked as so much rubbish; therefore I lovingly embrace everything you say. I shiver in awe before you; your decisions leave me speechless with reverence.

What can I do to detect and delete evil, negative influences in my life?

P–Pray for God's Perspective (Ayin: 121-128)

I stood up for justice and the right; don't leave me to the mercy of my oppressors. Take the side of your servant, good God; don't let the godless take advantage of me. I can't keep my eyes open any longer, waiting for you to keep your promise to set everything right. Let your love dictate how you deal with me; teach me from your textbook on life. I'm your servant—help me understand what that means, the inner meaning of your instructions. It's time to act, God; they've made a shambles of your revelation! Yea-Saying God, I love what you command, I love it better than gold and gemstones; Yea-Saying God, I honor everything you tell me, I despise every deceitful detour.

God's thoughts are the best thoughts–list some of your habits that might be out of sync with God's thoughts?

Q–Quicken Sensitivity to the Practicality of God's Word (Pe: 129-136)

Every word you give me is a miracle word—how could I help but obey? Break open your words, let the light shine out, let ordinary people see the meaning. Mouth open and panting, I wanted your commands more than anything. Turn my way, look kindly on me, as you always do to those who personally love you. Steady my steps with your Word of promise so nothing malign gets the better of me. Rescue me from the grip of bad men and women so I can live life your way. Smile on me, your servant; teach me the right way to live. I cry rivers of tears because nobody's living by your book!

I want to more deeply understand God's Word. Here is my prayer for understanding.

R–Reason the Merits of God's Word (Tsadhe: 137-144)

You are right and you do right, God; your decisions are right on target. You rightly instruct us in how to live ever faithful to you. My rivals nearly did me in, they persistently ignored your commandments. Your promise has been tested through and through, and I, your servant, love it dearly. I'm too young to be important, but I don't forget what you tell me. Your righteousness is eternally right, your revelation is the only truth. Even though troubles came down on me hard, your commands always gave me delight. The way you tell me to live is always right; help me understand it so I can live to the fullest.

God's Word and principles make sense–here's how I will demonstrate them in life.

S–Surrender to God's Providence (Qoph: 145-152)

I call out at the top of my lungs, "God! Answer! I'll do whatever you say." I called to you, "Save me so I can carry out all your instructions." I was up before sunrise, crying for help, hoping for a word from you. I stayed awake all night, prayerfully pondering your promise. In your love, listen to me; in your justice, God, keep me alive. As those out to get me come closer and closer, they go farther and farther from the truth you reveal; But you're the closest of all to me, God, and all your judgments true. I've known all along from the evidence of your words that you meant them to last forever.

Here are three areas in my life that I need to surrender to God.

T–Trust in God's Outcome (Resh: 153-160)

Take a good look at my trouble, and help me—I haven't forgotten your revelation. Take my side and get me out of this; give me back my life, just as you promised. "Salvation" is only gibberish to the wicked because they've never looked it up in your dictionary. Your mercies, God, run into the billions; following your guidelines, revive me. My antagonists are too many to count, but I don't swerve from the directions you gave. I took one look at the quitters and was filled with loathing; they walked away from your promises so casually! Take note of how I love what you tell me; out of your life of love, prolong my life. Your words all add up to the sum total: Truth. Your righteous decisions are eternal.

What are two immediate trials I face and how can I demonstrate greater trust with them?

U–Use Opposition to Show God's Power in Your Life (Sin and Shin: 161-168)

I've been slandered unmercifully by the politicians, but my awe at your words keeps me stable. I'm ecstatic over what you say, like one who strikes it rich. I hate lies—can't stand them!—but I love what you have revealed. Seven times each day I stop and shout praises for the way you keep everything running right. For those who love what you reveal, everything fits—no stumbling around in the dark for them. I wait expectantly for your salvation; God, I do what you tell me. My soul guards and keeps all your instructions—oh, how much I love them! I follow your directions, abide by your counsel; my life's an open book before you.

Obstacles are not pleasant. How can I use them to show God's glory?

V–Vindicate the Power of God's Presence (Taw: 169-176)

Let my cry come right into your presence, God; provide me with the insight that comes only from your Word. Give my request your personal attention; rescue me on the terms of your promise. Let praise cascade off my lips; after all, you've taught me the truth about life! And let your promises ring from my tongue; every order you've given is right. Put your hand out and steady me since I've chosen to live by your counsel. I'm homesick, God, for your salvation; I love it when you show yourself! Invigorate my soul so I can praise you well, use your decrees to put iron in my soul. And should I wander off like a lost sheep—seek me! I'll recognize the sound of your voice.

How can I demonstrate that I believe God works through the big and little things of life?

W–Worship God by the Truth of His Word (John 4:24)

The time is coming—it has, in fact, come—when what you're called will not matter and where you go to worship will not matter. It's who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That's the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before him in their worship.

Use these 26 insights on the Word as the basis of personal devotion and worship.

X–eXamine God's Prophecies and Predictions (Acts 17:10-12)

That night, under cover of darkness, their friends got Paul and Silas out of town as fast as they could. They sent them to Berea, where they again met with the Jewish community. They were treated a lot better there than in Thessalonica. The Jews received Paul's message with enthusiasm and met with him daily, examining the Scriptures to see if they supported what he said. A lot of them became believers, including many Greeks who were prominent in the community, women and men of influence.

Make a list of five Bible prophecies, study them, and then share them with others.

Y–Yield to God's Holy Spirit (1 John 4:1-6)

My dear friends, don't believe everything you hear. Carefully weigh and examine what people tell you. Not everyone who talks about God comes from God. There are a lot of lying preachers loose in the world. Here's how you test for the genuine Spirit of God. Everyone who confesses openly his faith in Jesus Christ—the Son of God, who came as an actual flesh-and-blood person—

comes from God and belongs to God. And everyone who refuses to confess faith in Jesus has nothing in common with God. This is the spirit of antichrist that you heard was coming. Well, here it is, sooner than we thought! My dear children, you come from God and belong to God. You have already won a big victory over those false teachers, for the Spirit in you is far stronger than anything in the world. These people belong to the Christ-denying world. They talk the world's language and the world eats it up. But we come from God and belong to God. Anyone who knows God understands us and listens. The person who has nothing to do with God will, of course, not listen to us. This is another test for telling the Spirit of Truth from the spirit of deception.

Do I know the plan of salvation and how to lead someone to Christ? Write out the steps.

Z–Zealously Live, Learn, and Lead With God's Word (2 Timothy 2:14-17)

Repeat these basic essentials over and over to God's people. Warn them before God against pious nitpicking, which chips away at the faith. It just wears everyone out. Concentrate on doing your best for God, work you won't be ashamed of, laying out the truth plain and simple. Stay clear of pious talk that is only talk. Words are not mere words, you know. If they're not backed by a godly life, they accumulate as poison in the soul.

How can I insure that the Word is integrated in my life, always and for good?

Our greatest duty to God and man is that of self development.

Ellen G. White

NINE CHARACTERISTICS OF A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE DEVOTIONAL LIFE (S.M.A.R.T. S.H.I.P.)*

Characteristic #1–Spirit-Filled and Prayerful Life

"Communion with God will ennoble the character and the life. We must live a twofold life--a life of thought and action, of silent prayer and earnest work." "You must pray as though the efficiency and praise were all due to God, and labor as though duty were all your own." "No man is safe for a day or an hour without prayer." On the other hand "he who does nothing but pray will soon cease to pray." "There is not an impulse of our nature, not a faculty of the mind or an inclination of the heart, but needs to be, moment by moment, under the control of the Spirit of God." "The Spirit illumines our darkness, informs our ignorance, and helps us in our manifold necessities. But the mind must be constantly going out after God. If worldliness is allowed to come in, if we have no desire to pray, no desire to commune with Him who is the source of strength and wisdom, the Spirit will not abide with us.

Characteristic #2–Model is Christ and His Righteousness

"The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness. Unless we become vitally connected with God, we can never resist the unhallowed effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and temptation to sin. We may leave off many bad habits, for the time we may

part company with Satan; but without a vital connection with God, through the surrender of ourselves to Him moment by moment, we shall be overcome. Without a personal acquaintance with Christ, and a continual communion, we are at the mercy of the enemy, and shall do his bidding in the end." "Christ and Him crucified should be the theme of contemplation, of conversation, and of our most joyful emotion."

CHARACTERISTIC #3–ACTIVE BIBLE STUDY DEVOTION

"Let your faith be substantiated by the Word of God. Grasp firmly the living testimony of truth. Have faith in Christ as a personal Saviour. He has been and ever will be our Rock of Ages." "Christians should be preparing for what is soon to break upon the world as an overwhelming surprise, and this preparation they should make by diligently studying the Word of God and striving to conform their lives to its precepts." "None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict." "Our people need to understand the oracles of God; they need to have a systematic knowledge of the principles of revealed truth, which will fit them for what is coming upon the earth and prevent them from being carried about by every wind of doctrine."

CHARACTERISTIC #4–REJOICING AND REFLECTIVE OUTLOOK

"In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have

nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history." "If there ever was a time when serious reflection becomes every one who fears God, it is now, when personal piety is essential. The inquiry should be made, 'What am I, and what is my work and mission in this time? On which side am I working--Christ's side or the enemy's side?' Your profession of faith is not your guarantee in that day, but the state of your affections. Is the soul-temple cleansed of its defilement? Are my sins confessed and am I repenting of them before God, that they may be blotted out? Do I esteem myself too lightly? Am I willing to make any and every sacrifice for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ? Do I feel every moment I am not my own, but Christ's property, that my service belongs to God, whose I am?" "We should ask ourselves, 'For what are we living and working? And what will be the outcome of it all?'"

CHARACTERISTIC #5–THREE ANGELS MESSAGE MINDSET

"In these last days it is our duty to ascertain the full meaning of the first, second, and third angels' messages. . . The first, second, and third angels' messages are all united and are revealed in the fourteenth chapter of Revelation from the sixth verse to the close." "Many saw the perfect chain of truth in the angels' messages and gladly received them in their order, and followed Jesus by faith into the heavenly sanctuary. These messages were represented to me as an anchor to the people of God. Those who understand and receive them will be kept from being swept away by the many delusions of Satan." "I have questioned in my mind, as I have seen the people in our cities hurrying to and fro

with business, whether they ever thought of the day of God that is just upon us. Every one of us should be living with reference to the great day which is soon to come upon us." "We cannot afford to live with no reference to the day of judgment; for though long delayed, it is now near, even at the door, and hasteth greatly. The trumpet of the Archangel will soon startle the living and wake the dead."

Characteristic #6–Safeguard the Soul Though Mind Control

"The ability to give a reason for our faith is a good accomplishment, but if the truth does not go deeper than this, the soul will never be saved. The heart must be purified from all moral defilement." "Few realize that it is a duty to exercise control over their thoughts and imaginations. It is difficult to keep the undisciplined mind fixed upon profitable subjects. But if the thoughts are not properly employed, religion cannot flourish in the soul. The mind must be preoccupied with sacred and eternal things, or it will cherish trifling and superficial thoughts. Both the intellectual and the moral powers must be disciplined, and they will strengthen and improve by exercise." "We greatly need to encourage and cultivate pure, chaste thoughts, and to strengthen the moral powers rather than the lower and carnal powers. God help us to awake from our self-indulgent appetites!"

Characteristic #7–Habitual Exercise of Belief Building

"Those who feel at liberty to question the Word of God, to doubt everything where there is any chance to be unbelieving, will find that it will require

a tremendous struggle to have faith when trouble comes. It will be almost impossible to overcome the influence that binds the mind which has been educated in the line of unbelief, for by this course the soul is bound in Satan's snare and becomes powerless to break the dreadful net that has been woven closer and closer about the soul." "In taking a position of doubt, man calls to his aid the agencies of Satan. But the only hope of one who has been educated in the line of unbelief is to fall all helpless upon the Saviour and, like a child, submit his will and his way to Christ that he may be brought out of darkness into His marvelous light. Man does not have the power to recover himself from the snare of Satan. He who educates himself in the line of questioning, doubting, and criticizing strengthens himself in infidelity."

CHARACTERISTIC #8–INNOVATIVE BIBLE MEMORIZATION STRATEGIES

"Several times each day precious, golden moments should be consecrated to prayer and the study of the Scriptures, if it is only to commit a text to memory, that spiritual life may exist in the soul." "God's precious Word is the standard for youth who would be loyal to the King of heaven. Let them study the Scriptures. Let them commit text after text to memory and acquire a knowledge of what the Lord has said." "Build a wall of scriptures around you, and you will see that the world cannot break it down. Commit the Scriptures to memory, and then throw right back upon Satan when he comes with his temptations, "It is written." This is the way that our Lord met the temptations of Satan, and resisted them." ""Keep a pocket Bible with you as you work, and improve every opportunity to commit to memory its precious promises." "Study the Word of

God. Commit its precious promises to memory so that, when we shall be deprived of our Bibles, we may still be in possession of the Word of God."

CHARACTERISTIC #9–PRACTICE THE PRESENCE OF JESUS

"Now Enoch was a representative of those who will be upon the earth when Christ shall come, who will be translated to heaven without seeing death." "How did Enoch walk with God? He educated his mind and heart to ever feel that he was in the presence of God, and when in perplexity his prayers would ascend to God to keep him." " If we find no pleasure now in the contemplation of heavenly things; if we have no interest in seeking the knowledge of God, no delight in beholding the character of Christ; if holiness has no attractions for us--then we may be sure that our hope of heaven is vain. Perfect conformity to the will of God is the high aim be constantly before the Christian. He will love to talk of God, of Jesus, of the home of bliss and purity which Christ has prepared for them that love Him. The contemplation of these themes, when the soul feasts upon the blessed assurances of God, the apostle represents as tasting 'the powers of the world to come.'" "If you are right with God today, you are ready if Christ should come today."

---

*All quotations in this section have been excerpted and rearranged from the chapter, Devotional Life of the Remnant, in the book, *Last Day Events*, by Ellen G. White, pages 63-74.

SEVEN SECRETS ON HOW TO DIG DEEPER IN GOD'S WORD

1. PRAY: For deep understanding

2. LISTEN: For the Voice of Providence

3. EXPECT: God to follow-through on study results

4. OBEY: Commands explicitly and promptly

5. COMMUNICATE: Good news with others

6. INITIATE: Discover truths—temporal and eternal

7. SYNERGIZE: Principles into personal and corporate life

SEVEN STEPS FOR MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE

1. DECIDE IT IS A PRIORITY FOR YOUR LIFE
We will not sacrifice to achieve that which is unimportant

2. SET A REALISTIC GOAL
Attempting to learn too much too quickly will result in frustration. Memorizing too little will bring boredom.

3. CHOOSE VERSES THAT TOUCH YOUR HEART
When God communicates to you through a passage, it is much easier to remember those verses.

4. CREATE A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AROUND YOU
Write out passages on note cards, and tape them to your mirror, treadmill, desk, or dashboard.

5. INCORPORATE THE VERSES INTO YOUR DAILY LIFE
Reflect on memorized verses when pressed to make a decision, when responding to an unkind person, when encouraging your family, or when you are under stress. Remember – if you don't use it, you'll lose it

6. IF POSSIBLE, LEARN SCRIPTURE WITH OTHERS

You can encourage one another, provide accountability, and even make reviewing passages into a game or contest. This especially works in the context of families.

7. REVIEW, REVIEW, REVIEW

It is work to learn God's Word, and the enemy will oppose and offer distraction. Scripture memory is a great discipline that will change your life, but it is a discipline!

FIFTEEN REASONS TO READ THE PSALMS

When you want... (Read...)

to find comfort Psalm 23
to meet God intimately Psalm 103
to learn a new prayer Psalm 136
to learn a new song Psalm 92
to learn more about God Psalm 24
to understand yourself more clearly Psalm 8
to know how to come to God each day Psalm 5
to be forgiven for your sins Psalm 51
to feel worthwhile Psalm 139
to understand why you should read the Bible Psalm 119
to give praise to God Psalm 145
to know that God is in control Psalm 146
to give thanks to God Psalm 136
to please God Psalm 15
to know why you should worship God Psalm 104

BIBLE FACTS AND STATS

Numbers of books:	66
Chapters:	1,189
Verses:	31,101
Words:	783,137
Letters:	3,566,480
Promises in the Bible:	1,260
Commands:	6,468
Predictions:	over 8,000
Fulfilled prophecy:	3,268 verses
Unfulfilled prophecy:	3,140
Number of questions:	3,294
Longest name:	Mahershalalhashbaz (Isaiah 8:1)
Longest verse:	Esther 8:9 (78 words)
Shortest verse:	John 11:35 (2 words: "Jesus wept").
Middle books:	Micah and Nahum
Middle verse:	Psalm 118:8
Middle chapter:	Psalm 117
Shortest chapter (by words):	Psalm 117 (by number of words)
Longest book:	Psalms (150 chapters)
Shortest book (by words):	3 John
Longest chapter:	Psalm 119 (176 verses)
The word "God" appears:	3,358
The word "Lord" appears:	7,736
Different authors:	40
Language translations:	over 1,200

OLD TESTAMENT STATISTICS:

Number of books:	39
Chapters:	929
Verses:	23,114
Words:	602,585
Letters:	2,278,100
Middle book:	Proverbs
Middle chapter:	Job 20
Middle verses:	2 Chronicles 20:17,18
Smallest book:	Obadiah
Shortest verse:	1 Chronicles 1:25
Longest verse:	Esther 8:9
Longest chapter:	Psalms 119
Largest book:	Psalms

NEW TESTAMENT STATISTICS:

Number of books:	27
Chapters:	260
Verses:	7,957
Words:	180,552
Letters:	838,380
Middle book:	2 Thessalonians
Middle chapters:	Romans 8, 9
Middle verse:	Acts 27:17
Smallest book:	3 John
Shortest verse:	John 11:35

NEW TESTAMENT STATISTICS:

Longest verse:	Revelation 20:4
Longest chapter:	Luke 1
Largest book:	Luke

BIBLE RELATED TIME PERIODS

4004 BC- 3004 BC	Adam to Methusaleh
3004 BC - 2348 BC	Ends with the Flood
2348 BC - 2004 BC	Begins with the Flood
2004 BC - 1754 BC	Abraham
1754 BC - 1504 BC	Joseph in Egypt
1504 BC - 1254 BC	Exodus
1254 BC - 1004 BC	Judges to Solomon
1004 BC - 754 BC	Division of Kingdoms
754 BC - 504 BC	Assyrian and Babylonian Captivities, Daniel
504 BC - 254 BC	Esther
254 BC - 1 AD	Ptolemies govern Jews, Rome governs Jews
1 AD - 250 AD	Ministry of Christ, Scattering of the Jews
250 AD - 500 AD	Constantine and Laodicean Council

ONLINE BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

These websites (active at publication time) are listed in an effort to supply the reader with additional Bible resources and material. While it is believed that these Christian websites have helpful materials and resources, inclusion on this list does not automatically indicate our full agreement with the contents. Please study and research everything with an eye to the Word of God.

www.adventist.org
www.Bibleinfo.com
www.sdanet.org
www.crosssearch.com
www.crosswalk.com
www.botcw.com
www.his-net.com
www.agapechristiansearch.com
www.reverendfun.com
www.christianitytoday.com
www.topsites.christiansunite.com
www.crosssearch.com
www.whiteestate.org
www.arthursfamily.com/omnilist/
www.biblemarking.faithweb.com
www.bibleuniverse.com
www.bibleinfo.com
www.kidsbibleinfo.com
www.preparingforeternity.com
www.worldincrisis.org/Library2.htm
www.christianet.com
www.bible.org
www.apologeticsindex.org
www.christiananswers.net
www.myutmost.org
www.beliefnet.com

52-WEEK BIBLE READING PLAN

	Epistles	The Law	History	Pslms	Poetry	Prophecy	Gospels
Week	*(Sunday)*	*(Monday)*	*(Tuesday)*	*(Wednesday)*	*(Thursday)*	*(Friday)*	*(Saturday)*
1	❑ Rom 1-2	❑ Gen 1-3	❑ Josh 1-5	❑ Ps 1-2	❑ Job 1-2	❑ Isa 1-6	❑ Matt 1-2
2	❑ Rom 3-4	❑ Gen 4-7	❑ Josh 6-10	❑ Ps 3-5	❑ Job 3-4	❑ Isa 7-11	❑ Matt 3-4
3	❑ Rom 5-6	❑ Gen 8-11	❑ Josh 11-15	❑ Ps 6-8	❑ Job 5-6	❑ Isa 12-17	❑ Matt 5-7
4	❑ Rom 7-8	❑ Gen 12-15	❑ Josh 16-20	❑ Ps 9-11	❑ Job 7-8	❑ Isa 18-22	❑ Matt 8-10
5	❑ Rom 9-10	❑ Gen 16-19	❑ Josh 21-24	❑ Ps 12-14	❑ Job 9-10	❑ Isa 23-28	❑ Matt 11-13
6	❑ Rom 11-12	❑ Gen 20-23	❑ Judg 1-6	❑ Ps 15-17	❑ Job 11-12	❑ Isa 29-33	❑ Matt 14-16
7	❑ Rom 13-14	❑ Gen 24-27	❑ Judg 7-11	❑ Ps 18-20	❑ Job 13-14	❑ Isa 34-39	❑ Matt 17-19
8	❑ Rom 15-16	❑ Gen 28-31	❑ Judg 12-16	❑ Ps 21-23	❑ Job 15-16	❑ Isa 40-44	❑ Matt 20-22
9	❑ 1Cor 1-2	❑ Gen 32-35	❑ Judg 17-21	❑ Ps 24-26	❑ Job 17-18	❑ Isa 45-50	❑ Matt 23-25
10	❑ 1Cor 3-4	❑ Gen 36-39	❑ Ruth	❑ Ps 27-29	❑ Job 19-20	❑ Isa 51-55	❑ Matt 26-28
11	❑ 1Cor 5-6	❑ Gen 40-43	❑ 1Sam 1-5	❑ Ps 30-32	❑ Job 21-22	❑ Isa 56-61	❑ Mark 1-2
12	❑ 1Cor 7-8	❑ Gen 44-47	❑ 1Sam 6-10	❑ Ps 33-35	❑ Job 23-24	❑ Isa 62-66	❑ Mark 3-4
13	❑ 1Cor 9-10	❑ Gen 48-50	❑ 1Sam 11-15	❑ Ps 36-38	❑ Job 25-26	❑ Jer 1-6	❑ Mark 5-6
14	❑ 1Cor 11-12	❑ Ex 1-4	❑ 1Sam 16-20	❑ Ps 39-41	❑ Job 27-28	❑ Jer 7-11	❑ Mark 7-8
15	❑ 1Cor 13-14	❑ Ex 5-8	❑ 1Sam 21-25	❑ Ps 42-44	❑ Job 29-30	❑ Jer 12-16	❑ Mark 9-10
16	❑ 1Cor 15-16	❑ Ex 9-12	❑ 1Sam 26-31	❑ Ps 45-47	❑ Job 31-32	❑ Jer 17-21	❑ Mark 11-12
17	❑ 2Cor 1-3	❑ Ex 13-16	❑ 2Sam 1-4	❑ Ps 48-50	❑ Job 33-34	❑ Jer 22-26	❑ Mark 13-14
18	❑ 2Cor 4-5	❑ Ex 17-20	❑ 2Sam 5-9	❑ Ps 51-53	❑ Job 35-36	❑ Jer 27-31	❑ Mark 15-16
19	❑ 2Cor 6-8	❑ Ex 21-24	❑ 2Sam 10-14	❑ Ps 54-56	❑ Job 37-38	❑ Jer 32-36	❑ Luke 1-2
20	❑ 2Cor 9-10	❑ Ex 25-28	❑ 2Sam 15-19	❑ Ps 57-59	❑ Job 39-40	❑ Jer 37-41	❑ Luke 3-4
21	❑ 2Cor 11-13	❑ Ex 29-32	❑ 2Sam 20-24	❑ Ps 60-62	❑ Job 41-42	❑ Jer 42-46	❑ Luke 5-6
22	❑ Gal 1-3	❑ Ex 33-36	❑ 1Ki 1-4	❑ Ps 63-65	❑ Prov 1	❑ Jer 47-52	❑ Luke 7-8
23	❑ Gal 4-6	❑ Ex 37-40	❑ 1Ki 5-9	❑ Ps 66-68	❑ Prov 2-3	❑ Lamentations	❑ Luke 9-10
24	❑ Eph 1-3	❑ Lev 1-3	❑ 1Ki 10-13	❑ Ps 69-71	❑ Prov 4	❑ Ezek 1-6	❑ Luke 11-12
25	❑ Eph 4-6	❑ Lev 4-6	❑ 1Ki 14-18	❑ Ps 72-74	❑ Prov 5-6	❑ Ezek 7-12	❑ Luke 13-14
26	❑ Phil 1-2	❑ Lev 7-9	❑ 1Ki 19-22	❑ Ps 75-77	❑ Prov 7	❑ Ezek 13-18	❑ Luke 15-16

	Epistles	The Law	History	Psalms	Poetry	Prophecy	Gospels
Week	*(Sunday)*	*(Monday)*	*(Tuesday)*	*(Wednesday)*	*(Thursday)*	*(Friday)*	*(Saturday)*
27	❑ Phil 3-4	❑ Lev 10-12	❑ 2Ki 1-5	❑ Ps 78-80	❑ Prov 8-9	❑ Ezek 19-24	❑ Luke 17-18
28	❑ Col 1-2	❑ Lev 13-15	❑ 2Ki 6-10	❑ Ps 81-83	❑ Prov 10	❑ Ezek 25-30	❑ Luke 19-20
29	❑ Col 3-4	❑ Lev 16-18	❑ 2Ki 11-15	❑ Ps 84-86	❑ Prov 11-12	❑ Ezek 31-36	❑ Luke 21-22
30	❑ 1Thes 1-3	❑ Lev 19-21	❑ 2Ki 16-20	❑ Ps 87-89	❑ Prov 13	❑ Ezek 37-42	❑ Luke 23-24
31	❑ 1Thes 4-5	❑ Lev 22-24	❑ 2Ki 21-25	❑ Ps 90-92	❑ Prov 14-15	❑ Ezek 43-48	❑ John 1-2
32	❑ 2Thes	❑ Lev 25-27	❑ 1Chr 1-4	❑ Ps 93-95	❑ Prov 16	❑ Dan 1-6	❑ John 3-4
33	❑ 1Tim 1-3	❑ Num 1-4	❑ 1Chr 5-9	❑ Ps 96-98	❑ Prov 17-18	❑ Dan 7-12	❑ John 5-6
34	❑ 1Tim 4-6	❑ Num 5-8	❑ 1Chr 10-14	❑ Ps 99-101	❑ Prov 19	❑ Hosea 1-7	❑ John 7-9
35	❑ 2Tim 1-2	❑ Num 9-12	❑ 1Chr 15-19	❑ Ps 102-104	❑ Prov 20-21	❑ Hosea 8-14	❑ John 10-12
36	❑ 2Tim 3-4	❑ Num 13-16	❑ 1Chr 20-24	❑ Ps 105-107	❑ Prov 22	❑ Joel	❑ John 13-15
37	❑ Titus	❑ Num 17-20	❑ 1Chr 25-29	❑ Ps 108-110	❑ Prov 23-24	❑ Amos 1-4	❑ John 16-18
38	❑ Philemon	❑ Num 21-24	❑ 2Chr 1-5	❑ Ps 111-113	❑ Prov 25	❑ Amos 5-9	❑ John 19-21
39	❑ Heb 1-4	❑ Num 25-28	❑ 2Chr 6-10	❑ Ps 114-116	❑ Prov 26-27	❑ Obadiah	❑ Acts 1-2
40	❑ Heb 5-7	❑ Num 29-32	❑ 2Chr 11-15	❑ Ps 117-118	❑ Prov 28	❑ Jonah	❑ Acts 3-4
41	❑ Heb 8-10	❑ Num 33-36	❑ 2Chr 16-20	❑ Ps 119	❑ Prov 29-30	❑ Micah	❑ Acts 5-6
42	❑ Heb 11-13	❑ Deut 1-3	❑ 2Chr 21-24	❑ Ps 120-121	❑ Prov 31	❑ Nahum	❑ Acts 7-8
43	❑ James 1-3	❑ Deut 4-6	❑ 2Chr 25-28	❑ Ps 122-124	❑ Eccl 1-2	❑ Habakkuk	❑ Acts 9-10
44	❑ James 4-5	❑ Deut 7-9	❑ 2Chr 29-32	❑ Ps 125-127	❑ Eccl 3-4	❑ Zephaniah	❑ Acts 11-12
45	❑ 1Pet 1-3	❑ Deut 10-12	❑ 2Chr 33-36	❑ Ps 128-130	❑ Eccl 5-6	❑ Haggai	❑ Acts 13-14
46	❑ 1Pet 4-5	❑ Deut 13-15	❑ Ezra 1-5	❑ Ps 131-133	❑ Eccl 7-8	❑ Zechariah 1-7	❑ Acts 15-16
47	❑ 2Pet	❑ Deut 16-19	❑ Ezra 6-10	❑ Ps 134-136	❑ Eccl 9-10	❑ Zechariah 8-14	❑ Acts 17-18
48	❑ 1John 1-3	❑ Deut 20-22	❑ Neh 1-4	❑ Ps 137-139	❑ Eccl 11-12	❑ Malachi	❑ Acts 19-20
49	❑ 1John 4-5	❑ Deut 23-25	❑ Neh 5-9	❑ Ps 140-142	❑ Song 1-2	❑ Rev 1-6	❑ Acts 21-22
50	❑ 2John	❑ Deut 26-28	❑ Neh 10-13	❑ Ps 143-145	❑ Song 3-4	❑ Rev 7-11	❑ Acts 23-24
51	❑ 3John	❑ Deut 29-31	❑ Esther 1-5	❑ Ps 146-148	❑ Song 5-6	❑ Rev 12-17	❑ Acts 25-26
52	❑ Jude	❑ Deut 32-34	❑ Esther 6-10	❑ Ps 149-150	❑ Song 7-8	❑ Rev 18-22	❑ Acts 27-28

INDEX

Bible Books—Sequential Order..... 536

Bible Books—Alphabetical Order..... 538

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT
Sequential Order

Old Testment

Genesis
1-2.....89
3.....149
7.....37

Exodus
20.....57

Leviticus
11.....125
25.....279

Numbers
13-14.....235
35.....259

Deuteronomy
6.....493

Joshua
1.....73

Judges
4.....181
7.....239

Ruth
1.....101

I Samuel
3.....489
20.....177

2 Samuel
11.....19
23.....271

1 Kings
3.....15

2 Kings
2.....417

1 Chronicles
10-11.....327

2 Chronicles
7.....373

Ezra
8.....441

Nehemiah
4.....343

Esther
4.....117

Job
1.....445

Psalm
1.....397
23.....205
32.....469
39.....291
51.....381
72.....319
73.....485
130.....355

Proverbs
1.....85
3.....477
7.....45
31.....307

Ecclesiastes
2.....145
3.....465
12.....185

Song of Solomon
4.....401

Isaiah
6.....287
12.....27
53.....315
55.....247
58.....473

Jeremiah
1.....77

Lamentations
3.....461

Ezekiel
1.....369
33.....385

Daniel
1.....173
6.....347

Hosea
3.....303
14.....29

Joel
2.....267

Amos
3.....61

Obadiah
1.....339
Jonah
2.....23
Micah
6.....157
7.....389
Nahum
1.....365
Habakkuk
1.....69
Zephaniah
1.....255
Haggai
1.....405
Zechariah
3.....105
Malachi
3.....433

New Testament
Matthew
5.....41
13.....437
17.....223
25.....7
Mark
15.....97
Luke
10.....331
11.....357
18.....361
23.....97
John
1.....137
3.....81
4.....3
6.....449
10.....113
13.....231
14.....227
15.....323
17.....481
Acts
1.....165
12.....109
Romans
7.....425
8..27,299,425
12.....377
14.....207
1 Corinthians
2.....457
6.....275
12.....189
13.....295
15.....53
2 Corinthians
1.....141
Galatians
6.....193
Ephesians
4.....453
6.....429
Philippians
2.....413
Colossians
2.....409
1 Thessalonians
4.....393
2 Thessalonians
2.....263
I Timothy
4.....153
6.....169
2 Timothy
4.....33
Titus
2.....215
Philemon
1.....243
Hebrews
1.....49
4.....283
8.....11
11.....161
12.....129
James
1.....421
3.....65
1 Peter
2.....201
2 Peter
1.....121
1 John
4.....93
5.....197
2 John
1.....251
3 John.....211
Jude.....133
Revelation
7.....335
14.....311
19.....351
21.....219

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
Alphabetical Order

Acts
1.....165
12.....109
Amos
3.....61
1 Chronicles
10-11.....327
2 Chronicles
7.....373
Colossians
2.....409
1 Corinthians
2.....457
6.....275
12.....189
13.....295
15.....53
2 Corinthians
1.....141
Daniel
1.....173
6.....347
Deuteronomy
6.....493
Ecclesiastes
2.....145
3.....465
12.....185
Ephesians
4.....453
6.....429
Esther
4.....117
Exodus
20.....57
Ezekiel
1.....369
33.....385
Ezra
8.....441
Galatians
6.....193
Genesis
1-2.....89
3.....149
7.....37
Habakkuk
1.....69
Haggai
1.....405
Hebrews
1.....49
4.....283
8.....11
11.....161
12.....129
Hosea
3.....303
14.....29
Isaiah
6.....287
12.....27
53.....315
55.....247
58.....473
James
1.....421
3.....65
Jeremiah
1.....77
Job
1.....445
Joel
2.....267
John
1.....137
3.....81
4.....3
6.....449
10.....113
13.....231
14.....227
15.....323
17.....481
1 John
4.....93
5.....197
2 John 1.....251
3 John.....211
Jonah
2.....23
Joshua
1.....73
Jude.....133
Judges
4.....181

7.....239
1 Kings
3.....15
2 Kings
2.....417
Lamentations
3.....461
Leviticus
11.....125
25.....279
Luke
10.....331
11.....357
18.....361
23.....97
Malachi
3.....433
Mark
15.....97
Matthew
5.....41
13.....437
17.....223
23.....47
25.....7
27.....97
Micah
6.....157
7.....389
Nahum
1.....365
Nehemiah
4.....343
Numbers
13-14.....235
35.....259
Obadiah
1.....339
1 Peter
2.....201
2 Peter
1.....121
Philemon
1.....243
Philippians
2.....413
Proverbs
1.....85
3.....477
7.....45
31.....307
Psalms
1.....397
23.....205
32.....469
39.....291
51.....381
72.....319
73.....485
119.....501
130.....355
Revelation
7.....335
14.....311
19.....351
21.....219
Romans
7.....425
8..227;299;425
12.....377
14.....207
Ruth
1.....101
I Samuel
3.....489
20.....177
2 Samuel
11.....19
23.....271
Song of Solomon
4.....401
1 Thessalonians
4.....393
2 Thessalonians
2.....263
I Timothy
4.....153
6.....169
2 Timothy
4.....33
Titus
2.....215
Zechariah
3.....105
Zephaniah
1.....255

What is your favorite Bible chapter? Is it in the Old or New Testament? Well, if a chapter comes to mind or not, this book will be an invaluable aid.

It is packed full of the best loved and often quoted golden chapters of the Bible for the 21 century reader.

As you study these 101-plus spiritual readings, you will be inspired, delighted, and encouraged with the practical wisdom and timely advice.

Oakwood College Quotebook Series
Office of the President
7000 Adventist Boulevard, NW
Huntsville, Alabama 35896
(256) 726-7000
www.oakwood.edu

Underwritten by Adventist Risk Management

Education • *Excellence* • *Eternity*